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## CHARLES DESVOEUX AT ACHIN 1772—73.

By S. N. Das Gupta.

On February 10, 1772, the Madras government decided to send two missions, one under Edward Monckton to negotiate the offer of the Sultan of Queda, the other to Achin under Charles Desvoeux to discourage private traders "from forming factories on their own account" and "to regulate trade and establish it on such a footing as would encourage merchants from all parts to the country".<sup>(1)</sup> This last was the outcome of the strong representations of the Court of Directors to Madras for detailed information of the exact nature of trade followed by private merchant associations like Jourdan, Sullivan and De Souza with Achin, Queda and other islands of the eastern archipelago, and the privileges which such associations have obtained "by means of their intercourse and traffic with these parts".<sup>(2)</sup> The Directors were "surprised as well as displeased" at the knowledge of the establishment of a trading factory at Achin "by a set of gentlemen of your Presidency who, by the intrigues of their factors, supported by a naval force and some hundreds of sepoys from your coast, have gained such an ascendancy as to restrain the freedom of trade hitherto enjoyed by Europeans in those parts".<sup>(3)</sup> They felt that such proceedings were alien to the express orders of the Company and "morally abhorrent", and foreshadowed the risk of involving the Company in disputes with other powers who may consider the activities of the agents of private firms as "invasion of the rights of their respective subjects". The Madras authorities were severely reprimanded for being blind to "such extraordinary measures" and for giving scope to "such an unwarrantable scheme to operate to such an extent"<sup>(4)</sup>. They were asked to employ every means in their power to put a stop to all abuses "which avarice of individuals may have prompted them to commit"<sup>(5)</sup>.

The above sentiments were expressed at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Court of Directors held on April 20, 1771, and received by Madras on December 31, 1771. The President and Council of Madras, in consequence, asked Messrs Jourdan, Sullivan and De Souza on January 24, 1772, to submit "a clear and particular

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(1) Factory Records, Sumatra 15, Instructions to Monckton and Desvoeux.

(2) Madras General Letters from Court, April 10, 1771; Factory Records, Sumatra

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) *Ibid.*

(5) *Ibid.*

account of the origin of that concern (the factory and trade at Achin), its progress from time to time and its present situation.....and satisfy the Præsident and Council and the Court of Directors in respect to the several complaints".<sup>(1)</sup> On February 10, 1772, the reply from the firm of De Souza was received along with letters from Captain Francis Light in respect to a territorial offer from the Sultan of Queda.

The kingdom of Achin lies in the north-west promontory of Sumatra. The correct place name is "Acheh" or "Achai" meaning "splendid" or "fine". The word is said to have been uttered in admiration by the first visitors from India on sighting the beautiful coast.<sup>(2)</sup> The word also means "a species of leach" which abounds in the forests along the western coast of Sumatra. The place is commonly but erroneously known to Europeans as "Acheen", "Atchin" or "Achin". This misconception was disclosed by Valentyn in 1688<sup>(3)</sup>. Achin saw the zenith of its power and glory during the first half of the seventeenth century. Its ascendancy was the outcome of the Portuguese policy of monopoly enforced on either side of the Malacca Strait resulting in the deflexion of the country trade from the usual resorts to "Acheh Besar" or "Achin proper". Achin rapidly developed in wealth and became the most powerful kingdom in north Sumatra. Its suzerainty stretched over a wide area considerably beyond its own frontiers, comprising at one time not only the whole of the east coast, with the kingdom of Siak, but also an extensive tract of the west coast including Padang and Indrapura. The Dutch were chiefly instrumental in bringing about the decline of Achin in the second half of the seventeenth century. Achin was forced to yield to a superior power and to a policy of aggressive diplomacy. The feudal system of government broke down. The power of the central authority weakened. The inland provinces and the subordinate chiefs increased in strength, and the ensuing struggle between the centrifugal and centripetal forces in eighteenth century Achin is not very dissimilar to the contest between the monarchy and the feudal baronage in medieval Europe. Thenceforth the power of Achin was gradually confined to the narrow limits of northern Sumatra.

The English East India Company had established a trading station at Achin in the seventeenth century though this had not proved profitable and had been withdrawn, chiefly due to the interference of the Dutch who "prevented the Company's agent from

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<sup>(1)</sup> Goodlad (Secretary to the Madras Council) to Jourdan, Sullivan and De Souza January 24, 1772; Factory Records, Sumatra 15, 1772-73.

<sup>(2)</sup> J.S.B.R.A.S. No. 5, June 1880, p. 37.

<sup>(3)</sup> *Ib id.*

lading what he had agreed for and forced the English ships away to the loss of their whole voyage".<sup>(1)</sup> Trade with Achin, however, was not altogether abandoned and private English merchants, Surat and other country vessels continued to visit the place and did a profitable trade by bartering the "coast cloths" of India for Achin pepper, which was "bigger and heavier than that of Malabar and was hence more prized by Indians".<sup>(2)</sup> Trade was carried on mostly upon credit and entirely by retail, "sometimes one piece of cloth, sometimes five and scarcely ever more than twenty at a time".<sup>(3)</sup> The usual practice was to sell on credit to Malay merchants "opium, piece goods etc." for which they promised to return, in three or four months, betel-nut, pepper and other products of the islands of the archipelago; it frequently happened that they did not "come back so soon as the time stipulated".<sup>(4)</sup> All matters relating to trade, commerce, and the customs of the port came under the jurisdiction of the *Shahbundar* who gave license to trade. The king, as usual in other Malay states, was the chief merchant and no trade could be done at Achinese ports without his letter of authority. The internal disturbances, however, were a hindrance to trade and when several visiting vessels were treacherously cut off, Achin was deserted by country traders and English merchants for many years.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, methods of conducting business came to be organised "on a definite and permanent basis". Firms took the place of "loosely associated individuals". The jointstock method of trade became more "permanent partnerships". Messrs Jourdan, Sullivan and De Souza was one of these several joint-stock trading firms which aimed particularly at re-establishing the English trade at Achin. In 1766, the *Indian Trader*, 350 tons burden, was purchased and despatched by Jourdan to Achin, with opium from Bengal and blue cotton cloth from Porto Novo, in charge of Gowan Harrop supercargo.<sup>(5)</sup> Harrop "could not make any immediate sales on account of troubles that subsisted there".<sup>(6)</sup> He had to land "a Moor agent" to take charge of the cargo, while he proceeded to Rhio. The agent was obliged, owing to increased trouble, to transport the goods under his charge on board

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<sup>(1)</sup> Reports of the Council of Trade and Plantations, P.R.O.O.C. 77, VIII.

<sup>(2)</sup> Purchas II, pp. 317-18.

<sup>(3)</sup> Desvieux to Du Pre, April 15, 1772; Factory Records, Sumatra 15, 1772-73.

<sup>(4)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(5)</sup> Jourdon to Sullivan and De Souza, June 17, 1772, Sumatra 15.

<sup>(6)</sup> *Ibid.*



a ship belonging to the king of Achin.<sup>(1)</sup> On an outbreak of hostilities between Achin and the French; the goods of the English traders were seized by the latter and in spite of representations to the Madras government no redress could be obtained by Jourdan's association for the losses sustained.<sup>(2)</sup> On Harrop's return to Achin, the king, in lieu of some outstanding debts, offered him "a piece of ground to build an house and warehouse upon",<sup>(3)</sup> and engaged to give the association

"one half of the advantages of the retail trade of his country, which from custom belonged to him, on the condition that we would advance money for the purchase of goods and keep on shore a number of our people armed, that in case of his being attacked, we might give him the assistance of a few men with firelocks of which the Malays are still apprehensive".<sup>(4)</sup>

To Jourdan and his associates "the offer appeared advantageous" and was immediately accepted. The strength of their forces on board the vessel *Indian Trader* was increased by seventy-five, enlisted and shipped mainly at Nagore, on the Tanjore coast.<sup>(5)</sup> The king's move not only served to cover the initial losses sustained by the Madras adventurers but helped to increase their trade, and Achin from "an inconsiderable town" became once more a centre of commerce drawing to its port, as before,

"many English as well as Moor vessels, who, before had not ventured into that port, now came to trade, as Mr. Harrop frequently assisted them in the sales of their goods, sometimes taking off whole cargoes on account of the king for bills on me (Jourdan) by which, vessels that would otherwise have been obliged to wait many months to collect the goods of the inhabitants in payment of the goods by them sold, were enabled to proceed further into the straights and take the advantage of other markets".<sup>(6)</sup>

It was then that the incident of the *Fortune* occurred. The king, at the instigation of Harrop, had prohibited his subjects from having any trade dealings with the vessel when it touched the port of Achin. Complaints made by the merchants of the *Fortune* forced the

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(1) Jourdan to Sullivan and De Souza, June 17, 1772, Sumatra 15.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) *Ibid.*

(5) *Ibid.*

(6) *Ibid.*

Directors to take cognizance of the dealings of Jourdan's association at Achin and despatch to Madras orders, referred above, to enquire into and remove the causes of complaint "or make it appear that the facts have been exaggerated to us".<sup>(1)</sup> Jourdan refuted all charges on his association to monopolize the trade at Achin and throw impediments on the way of other merchants. On the contrary, the association had "to run great risks" and had been "put to great expenses" in the pursuit of that trade, while the greater part of the advantages therefrom were reaped by the Company and other merchants trading to that port.<sup>(2)</sup> Jourdan wrote:

"The amount of goods from time to time exported from the Company's bounds has not been far short of 300,000 pagodas, on which the Company's customs have been duly paid and the amount of goods imported (of which a considerable quantity of different articles have been sold to the Company for China) must have amounted to nearly as much which could not have, but for the protection of the king of Achin to Mr. Harrop"<sup>(3)</sup>.

Jourdan and his colleagues thus explained away the charges against Harrop as "ill-founded". The king of Achin, reduced to a state of penury, was "frequently obliged to borrow money for his subsistence, and his jewels, paltry as they are, are pawned".<sup>(4)</sup> His main source of income was from the port duties which amounted annually to about Rs. 60,000. This he had farmed out for five years to merchants who agreed to pay him the amount in monthly instalments and "in consideration of the trouble and expense they were to have in collecting these duties, he had granted to them an exclusive privilege of trade".<sup>(5)</sup> The king had also contracted a huge debt of over Rs. 40,000 from Jourdan's association and "was entirely subsisted from the factory on an enormous expense and this without the smallest prospect of advantage and a very precarious one of payment".<sup>(6)</sup> For the discharge of this debt, he had entered into an agreement with Harrop to pay Rs. 10,000 annually out of the sum realized from the port duties. But Harrop had failed to obtain more than 100 pagodas in three years and was "frequently obliged, in order to avoid an open quarrel, to overlook chicanery and breaches of promise".<sup>(7)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> Madras General Letters from Court, April 10, 1771; Factory Records Sumatra, 15, 1772-73.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(3)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(4)</sup> Desvoeux to Dupre, Achin, May 23, 1772, Sumatra 15, 1772-73.

<sup>(5)</sup> Same to same, Achin, April 15, 1772, *Ibid.*

<sup>(6)</sup> Same to same, December 9, 1772, *Ibid.*

<sup>(7)</sup> *Ibid.*

It may be surmised from the correspondence that the Madras government was not aware of any high-handed proceedings of the trading firm of Jourdan and his colleagues. The letter from the Court came as a surprise to them. The Court "being confidently assured that the greatest commercial and naval advantages may be obtained both for the Company and individuals by opening a more intimate connection with the Achinese" under the Company's flag, revised their previous opinion of April 10, 1771, and in a fresh despatch to Madras of May 8, 1771, sent instructions for taking necessary measures by which "the factory and settlement made by private persons, contrary to our knowledge and without any powers derived from the Company" should be delivered over to the Company "together with the powers and immunities with which those private traders may have been invested from the governing authority there" <sup>(1)</sup>. Reasonable compensation was to be granted to Jourdan's association "for what they have actually expended in establishing a trade at that port (Achin)" <sup>(2)</sup>. Previous to forming an actual settlement, a conventioned servant, who could be depended on for his abilities as a diplomat was to be sent to Achin "to know what advantages and privileges the Company are to expect from the king upon forming such an establishment and to treat for and settle articles the most favourable for that purpose" <sup>(3)</sup>. Stipulations were to be of a purely commercial nature. Territorial acquisitions were to be wholly abjured. Political engagements with the king, if any, were to be defensive based on principles of non-intervention and should not in any way hurt the sentiments of other European powers <sup>(4)</sup>.

The instructions submitted to Desvoeux by the Madras government were as follows: to take over on the Company's behalf, at a fair valuation, all the privileges which the private traders had secured at Achin; to provide military assistance to the king against external attack; to secure the port duties for the upkeep of the British force; failing this, to "insist that the collection, at least, of these duties be entirely left to the Company, who will account to the king for them and after defraying the annual amount of military charges pay the residue into his treasury if any should remain"; but if the collections were not sufficient to cover the military expenses, the king should compensate for the deficiency from his treasury. The Company had "no desire for any extensive territorial acquisition neither did it want to interfere or have any concern in the

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<sup>(1)</sup> Secret Committee of Directors to Select Committee at Fort St. George, May 8, 1771; Factory Records, Sumatra 15.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(3)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(4)</sup> *Ibid.*

affairs of his country<sup>(1)</sup>". Its intention was "to render the undertaking as little expensive as possible"<sup>(2)</sup>. Desvoeux was told:

"We do not mean that you should commence any extensive concerns or launch out into distant trade in the hope of acquiring considerable profit.....we mean to confine you to barter on the spot the sale of such goods as may be consigned to you for staple articles proper for the China market or for money or gold dust and we shall be happy to find that the expenses of supporting you in the Residency are compensated for by such trade<sup>(3)</sup>".

Desvoeux reached Achin in the *Snow Adventure* on March 26, 1772, with Lieutenant Thomas Lane in command of the detachment of sepoys "to be employed in the service". Harrop was absent at the time and Desvoeux considered it prudent to wait for his advice before an interview with the king. In the meantime, he investigated the state of affairs and submitted a severe condemnation on the transactions of Jourdan's association:

"The more I have enquired the more I have been amazed; here has been for four or five years past an extensive business carrying on by people by no means adequate to the charge; here has been money after money continually advancing to the Sultan without scarcely the most distant prospect of payment; here have been almost endless expenses incurred and losses sustained in removing the factory from one place to another without even a plausible reason to be assigned for it; in short, here have been so many absurdities committed, that one would almost imagine men must have been infatuated to have entrusted such large concerns into the hands of people so ill-qualified to conduct them"<sup>(4)</sup>.

in January 1772, Holloway, the Resident at Tappanooly had arrived with orders from the governor and council at Fort Marlbro' "to endeavour to establish a factory for the Company at the place". The king of Achin had refused to comply with his demand<sup>(5)</sup>. Desvoeux was troubled with the thought of failure. Harrop returned on March 29, and explained to Desvoeux that the king personally had no objection to the establishment of a factory but that he had very little influence over his principal ministers who were

(1) Dupre to Desvoeux, Feb. 23, 1772; Sumatra 15.

(2) Same to Same, June 28, 1772, Sumatra 15.

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) Desvoeux to Du Pre, Achin, March 28, 1772, Sumatra 15.

(5) Madras Consultations, June 24, 1772, Sumatra 15.

"apprehensive in such a case that the protection the Sultan would receive from the Company would enable him to oblige them to pay him that respect and submission which they have for some years almost entirely shaken off"<sup>(1)</sup>.

In his first audience with the king, Desvoeux was "very civilly received"<sup>(2)</sup>. The king, while expressing satisfaction at the prospect of military assistance from the English factory, was not willing to comply with the demand for the assignment of the port duties to the Company. On April 8, the king granted to the Company permission for the erection of a factory in the following terms:

"The Sultan of Achin thoroughly sensible of the friendship of the English East India Company now manifested towards him in a more particular manner by sending a body of troops for his protection is very happy at the thoughts of their establishing a factory in his country.

"The factory now occupied by Harrop for the purpose of carrying on the trade of his employers being inconveniently situated, the Sultan will grant to the Company a proper spot for erecting a new one, as soon as one can be pitched upon; but as this cannot be done immediately and as the Sultan is desirous that no time should be lost in testifying his gratitude and goodwill to the Company, he does hereby grant unto them the ground on which the factory now occupied by Mr. Harrop stand which is to be their property until another factory shall be elsewhere erected by them.

"The ground allotted for the new factory shall be nearer to the mouth of the river than the present for the greater conveniency of landing goods from boats"<sup>(3)</sup>.

The British colours were hoisted on the same day. On the following day (April 9) Desvoeux succeeded in negotiating the privilege of exporting and importing goods free of duty in all parts of the king's dominions<sup>(4)</sup>. Before long, however, he realised the inability of the King to fulfil the terms of the agreement with the Company. By a previous agreement with merchants, the king had farmed out the port duties for a period of five years and "were he himself to bear

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(1) Madras Consultations, June 24, 1772, Sumatra 15,

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) Translation of the Sultan of Atchin's Grant of a Factory to the English East India Company, dated April 8, 1772 (Enclosed in Desvoeux's Letter to Du Pre, Atchin, April 15, 1772); Madras Consultations, June 25, 1772, Sumatra 15.

(4) *Ibid.*

the Company's expenses out of the sums paid to him by the farmers he must himself starve"(1). Moreover, one half of the duties were mortgaged to Harrop's employers for the payment of the large debt due to them, and the association was not inclined to close its business at Achin until the debt was recovered. Sullivan and De Souza communicated their sentiments to Governor Du Pre in the following terms:

".....declared our apprehension that those people whom we were always obliged to sell to on credit and who were now considerably indebted to us, would take advantage of the Company's intention and find means to evade payment of their just debt to us, unless compelled thereto by the authority of the Company"(2).

In consequence of the contract with the king, Harrop had purchased goods to a considerable amount which, together with those in the warehouses, could not all be disposed of at once. Sullivan and De Souza hence writes:—

".....that from the nature and tenor of our contract entered into by our agent before the Company's intention could be made known to him and from the quantity of goods purchased by him, it would be absolutely out of our power to conclude our business at Achin for a considerable time"(3).

The firm demanded reasonable compensation for closing their business at Achin:

".....as we shall be deprived by the Company's taking this trade into their own hands, of the fruits of our labour, expenses and risques in re-establishing and bringing it to its present footing and be left burthened with the heavy charge of two large ships bought particularly for this trade.....we shall be greatly embarrassed and suffer considerably in our private fortunes unless you be well pleased so far as to relieve us as to take on the Company's account at an appraisement to be made at Achin the goods and warehouses we have there, in doing of which the Company can sustain no loss....."(4).

It was not the intention of the Company "to distress the concerned". On the contrary, the Company desired "to show every indulgence we can consistently with our duty"(5). Du Pre gave

(1) Desvieux to Du Pre, Achin, April 15, 1772, Sumatra 15.

(2) Sullivan and De Souza to Du Pre, Fort St. George, June 17, 1772, Sumatra 15.

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) *Ibid.*

(5) President and Council, Fort St. George to Desvieux, June 28, 1772, Sumatra

assurance to Jourdan and his colleagues that the Company shall offer every assistance for the proper settlement of their concerns and the recovery of their debts and allow a reasonable time for the disposal of their effects "within which time no trade should be commenced on the Company's account". A despatch to Desvieux asked him,

"to permit the concerned to continue their trade on its present footing and without any interfering on the part of the Company until the end of January 1773", and "to receive from them the immunity by which they are entitled to half the duties on imports and exports till the Sultan's debt to them is discharged, but nevertheless to permit them to enjoy under the Company the advantages arising from that immunity till the said debt be discharged"<sup>(1)</sup>.

The idea of Du Pre was to continue Harrop in the collection of the port duties "in the name of the Company as servants employed by you". Harrop was to render to Desvieux "a just, clear and true account of the collections" which was to be brought over in the books of the Company "as collected on the part of the Company and that done you (Desvieux) will restore to them (Jourdan's firm) the net amount to which they are entitled, in discharge of so much of the Sultan's debt"<sup>(2)</sup>. Desvieux, thenceforth, attempted mainly to secure the king's share of the port duties. But he was soon convinced of the king's "unwillingness to grant unto the Company any further immunities"<sup>(3)</sup>. All he could obtain was a verbal promise which was never confirmed in a written order. He wrote to Du Pre on December 9:

"As to his (King's) promise he paid very little regard to it; however, at length he consented that the customs on all vessels carrying European Commanders should be collected until the first day of January, 1773 by the Company's servants, one half of the sums so collected to be appropriated to the Company's use, the other half, after settling the accounts to be paid to Mr. Harrop in discharge of his debt to his employers, but after that day he reserved to himself the power of taking them again into his own hands if he should think proper; this is all I could obtain and even this with much difficulty"<sup>(4)</sup>.

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<sup>(1)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(2)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(3)</sup> Desvieux to Du Pre, Achin, December 9, 1772, Madras Consultations, December 29, 1772, Sumatra 15.

<sup>(4)</sup> *Ibid.*

The English factory, situated on the bank "of a very pleasant river", about a quarter of a mile from the king's fort, was not protected by any ramparts or ditch and was "quite exposed" to attack on the south and east. Lascars were employed in raising "a bastion of turf", but orders came from the king to stop the work of improving the fortifications as

"the bastion I had already erected had much alarmed his subjects who were universally possessed with a notion that the Company after having built a strong fort intended to enslave them in the same manner as they had at Bencoolen and several other places on the west of the island"(1).

Reports also came to Desvoeux that

"numbers of people came down from the hills with a design to drive us out of the country before the arrival of the reinforcement they imagined we expected from the coast"(2).

To have delayed longer with the fortifications would have been "imprudent". In spite of further orders from the king, Desvoeux "set about the work in earnest". The people from the hills "continued some days about the factory but at length returned home without attempting to molest us, having been prevented only.....by the fear of our musketry"(3).

The king explained to Desvoeux that this "uncommon concourse of people" must have been the result of a rumour that he had sold his country to the English. On November 15, Desvoeux received "a formal message" from the king asking the English to leave the country "in peace" to prevent "a general insurrection"(4). The king found himself under "the disagreeable necessity" of calling the grant of a factory he had lately made to the Company. A letter to much the same effect was addressed by the king to the President and Council of Madras(5). Desvoeux did not apprehend an open attack since he knew the Achinese "to be very deficient in courage". But they could be "troublesome" and distress the English by cutting off supplies and stopping communications with the sea. The handful of English at Achin may be placed under the unpleasant situation of struggling "for every article of provision". He, therefore, asked for

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(1) *Ibid.*

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) *Ibid.*

(5) *Ibid.*



immediate reinforcement from Madras and, in the meantime, informed the King that it was beyond his powers "to comply with his requests without orders from my superiors at Madras" from whom "an answer might be expected in the month of February"<sup>(1)</sup>.

The decision of the Madras Council, January 16, 1773, was despatched by the Company's schooner *Cuddalore*, Captain John Wedderburn, on January 19, 1773, and must have reached Desvoeux in February 1773. The Madras government was convinced that Desvoeux could not "remain any longer at Achin either with safety to himself or any prospect of advantage to the Company"<sup>(2)</sup>. It was therefore resolved to withdraw the factory immediately and Desvoeux was advised "to return to the coast with his detachment and stores as soon as possible"<sup>(3)</sup>. The king was to make reasonable compensation to the Company for the considerable expenses incurred by the establishment of a factory at Achin or,

"at least that he should reimburse the charges they have sustained by the building and repairs of the fort which will become his property on Mr. Desvoeux's quitting the country"<sup>(4)</sup>.

Thus the attempt of the English Company to renew the relations with Achin was brought to a sudden end, and with it collapsed the trading adventure of the firm of Jourdan, Sullivan and De Souza.

(<sup>1</sup>) *Ibid.*

(<sup>2</sup>) Letter to Desvoeux, Fort St. George, January 16, 1773, Sumatra 15.

(<sup>3</sup>) *Ibid.*

(<sup>4</sup>) *Ibid.*

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## THE CORRESPONDENCE OF MODAVE.

(By S. P. Sen.)

In the second half of the 18th century a large number of French military adventurers swarmed the courts of the various Indian Princes in search of career and fortune. Some of them achieved reputation, power and wealth, while others were destined to remain in oblivion. Their adventures and experience give us an interesting view of the political situation of India after the disintegration of the Mughal empire. One of these French adventurers, less known to students of history than Sombre or Madec, was Louis-Laurent Dolisy Comte de Modave, who was in India from 1773 to 1777 and travelled extensively all over the country. Some extracts from his *Journal du voyage du Bengale a Delhi* have been translated by Sir Jadunath Sarkar and published in the *Bengal Past and Present and Islamic Culture*. They do not, however, give us a connected account of the adventures of this interesting Frenchman. A fuller and detailed history of Modave's career in India may be gathered from the large number of his letters addressed to Bellecombe, Governor of Pondicherry, and others, which are preserved in the Pondicherry Archives and which form an important collection of original manuscripts there<sup>1</sup>. One letter in particular, written to Bellecombe in the form of a "memoire" from Sangi near Adoni, and dated May 1, 1777, is of great interest, as containing a detailed narrative of his adventures in northern India and in the Deccan, and an account of the state of affairs at the Courts of Delhi and Hyderabad and of the desire of the Emperor and Nizam Ali to have some French troops in their service to counteract the increasing power of the English.

Modave was in a way different from the rest of the French adventurers of the time, although he also came to India purely as a soldier of fortune. In contrast to the obscure origins and lack of education of most of his compatriots who sought careers in the service of the Indian Princes, Modave was a polished and cultured noble, quoting freely from the Classics as well as from Montesquieu and Voltaire. He was a keen observer of men and things and was gifted with an excellent style. These two qualities give his accounts a much greater interest to students of history than those of others. Modave was an officer in the Cavalry and had seen service in

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1. Dec No. 283.—Catalogue des Manuscrits des Anciennes Archives de l'Inde Française, I.

Germany during the Seven Years War. He was later appointed Governor of Madagascar, but he soon gave it up and turned into a planter. His plantation schemes, however, only brought him financial ruin. He ran into debts and orders were issued for his arrest. Leaving his wife in the Isle of France (Mauritius), he came to India in 1773 to retrieve his fortune by offering his services to one of the Princes. He visited Pondicherry and Chandernagore, but did not stay long at either place for fear of being arrested. At Chandernagore he came in contact with Chevalier, who appeared not only cold towards him but positively hostile to his plan of seeking a military career in north India and wrote to Madec, then in the service of Najaf Khan, not to give any help or encouragement to him.

Modave remained in Bengal for eleven months, most of the time in Calcutta, where he had an opportunity of seeing from close quarters the military strength and the system of civil administration of the English. In his letter to Bellecombe, dated May 1, 1777, referred to above, Modave stated that contrary to the wishful thinking of many Frenchmen the English position in Bengal was quite secure, being based on two firm foundations, military strength and a benevolent civil administration. There were 3700 European troops, divided into three Brigades and stationed at Calcutta, Kasimbazar and Patna, besides 27,000 sepoys, divided into Battalions and commanded by European officers. Modave, who had witnessed a parade in 1774, did not think much of the European troops but was highly impressed by the sepoys. There was a large and well-served artillery, divided into three sections, supporting each of the three Infantry Brigades. Commenting on the strength and efficiency of the English army in Bengal Modave wrote, "I have seen this military machine and I have examined it carefully. I can assure you that it is not to be slighted in any way, and that being supported by the internal resources of the country and the fort of Calcutta it can be quite sufficient for defence." He had also seen the fort, a plan of which, he believed, must have been sent to Bellecombe by Chevalier who had taken it secretly from the office of Major Polier, the Chief Engineer of the fort. Modave disapproved of the way in which the troops were kept at Kasimbazar and Patna, completely exposed to any surprise attack. He expressed great admiration for the English Administration in Bengal and particularly for the wisdom and sagacity of Warren Hastings whose constant concern was to make "the British Government loved". Hastings had established law and order throughout the province, recognised the proprietary of the landlords and attempted to combine the principles of English law with the laws and customs of the Hindus and Muslims. The interests of the local people were fully protected by law and in fact

sometimes the scales of justice turned so much in their favour that as an Englishman complained to Modave in Calcutta, "it was difficult to get justice against a Bengali".

From Bengal Modave went to Faizabad and then to Lucknow towards the end of 1774, hoping to get employment under Shuja-ud-daulah who had just returned from a victorious campaign against the Rohillas. There were many well-known Frenchmen in Shuja's service at the time,—Gentil, Aumont, Visage and others; and although the English did not like any addition to their number, Shuja gave Modave the command of a detachment which he proposed to send to Delhi to the help of the Emperor, on a monthly salary of four thousand rupees. But the sudden death of Shuja in January 1775 upset all arrangements, as the English put effective pressure upon his successor not to give any employment to Modave, and in fact all the Frenchmen in the service of the Nawab of Oudh were thrown out.

Modave next thought of employment under the Emperor and wrote to Madec who was then in the service of Najaf Khan and has great influence at the Imperial Court. On Madec's assurance of all possible help Modave started for Agra, where he arrived on the 10th March, 1775. From there he proceeded to Bari, Madec's headquarters, and received a warm welcome. Two days after Modave's arrival at Bari there came a messenger from Delhi with a letter from a Frenchman settled there, informing him that the Emperor coming to know of Modave's arrival at Agra had ordered his minister, Abdul Ahad Khan, to contact him and to induce him to join the Imperial service and that a Wakil from the minister was waiting for him at Agra. Arrangements were quickly completed through the intervention of Madec who even supplied money and necessary equipments for the journey to Delhi. Modave reached Delhi about the middle of April 1775, and within a few days the terms and conditions of service were settled. He was given a salary of 2,500 rupees per month, besides the amounts to be paid to his "Diwan" and domestic servants. Two other Frenchmen, Dieu and Moncelet, who had joined Modave at Faizabad, also received appointments on 600 and 400 rupees respectively. After the terms had been finally settled Modave had his first audience with the Emperor where he was received "with the same solemnity which since then I have seen practised only for an Ambassador of Timur Shah, king of Kandahar". For his residence he was given the palace of Shaista Khan. A part of the troops under his command was garrisoned there, the remainder being stationed in the fort to guard the person of the Emperor. The fort of Shalimghar and the whole of the Imperial artillery were also to have been placed under his control.

Modave used to go to "the Darbar of the Minister everyday and three or four times a week to the audience of the Padcha". He was taken into confidence by the Emperor, who thought of utilising him for negotiations for an alliance with France. "This Prince expressed to me a great desire to enter into correspondence with the King (of France). I believe that it came from a hope to draw from it some help and by that means to impose his authority on his great vassals.....I come to this conclusion because of the attempts which this Prince made on several occasions to open a correspondence with the King of England.....As I felt myself greatly obliged to Madec, I wished to turn in his favour the desire which I saw in the Padcha to write to the King. I myself made the model of the letter<sup>2</sup>. It was translated into Persian. The minister of the Padcha wrote on his side to M. de Sartine. Madec gave an account to the Minister about the object of this letter and of affairs in Hindusthan in general. The Padcha had authorised him to offer to the king Parawanas for the town of Tatta-Bakar and of the province of Sind"<sup>3</sup>. Modave continued that the despatch of the Emperor's letter met with an accident in the Ganges, "and the letter of the Padcha was so much spoilt that it was no longer presentable. The packet of Madec for M. de Sartine had not suffered from this accident. The Minister must have received it and I do not know what conclusion he will draw from it in the absence of the letter of the Great Mogol to the King mentioned therein. There were duplicates of all these documents in the hands of Madec. I do not know if he had made any use of them, for I left Hindusthan a few weeks after learning of the disaster to the packet".

It is better to interrupt the course of the narrative here and turn to another letter of Modave, dated Agra, October 19, 1775, and addressed to Moracin, Intendant at Pondicherry, which contains some interesting details about the proposal for an alliance with France and the cession of Tatta. Modave wrote to Moracin that the same despatch included a letter from the Emperor to Law, Governor of Pondicherry, expressing his full confidence in Madec. "He (the Emperor) begged Law to make known this confidence to the minister of the King (of France) and to write to France that Madec knew all his intentions. The object of this letter.....is to draw the attention of the Ministers to the things that Madec will write to the Court. In fact, the Emperor has asked him to propose an alliance between him and the King. He hopes from his overtures to be able to procure a corps of French troops, with which he will make

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<sup>2</sup>"The first draft is contained in Modave's "Journal du Voyage du Bengale a Delhi".

<sup>3</sup>For an account of the Tatta Project see author's Paper, "A French Project for the Conquest of Sind", Proceedings of Indian Historical Records Commission, Silver Jubilee Session, 1948.

himself recognised and obeyed and in addition will be in a position to impress the English who are causing him great alarm by the successive acquisitions they are making on both sides of the Ganges in pushing up this river. The means which the Emperor is employing to obtain this help is the offer, pure and simple, which he has made to the King of a strong place and a large territory.....I am going to disclose them to you while asking you to maintain the greatest secrecy regarding this object. It is the town and the Souba of Tatta situated on the river Indus at a distance of 20 leagues from its mouth. The Emperor did not wish to inform Monsieur Law of this intention because he was afraid that the matter might leak out and the English might come to know of it. I have no fear in informing you about it, because I know very well that you will make a prudent use of this information and that you will induce M. Law to write strongly to France as the Padcha desires.....". Modave then stated what part he played in the negotiations and in what form letters were written to the Minister in France. "This negotiation which I have conducted in Delhi required, as you can well understand, some details to show its merit in France. It is for this object that I have come to Agra where Madec resides. As a result he has sent to the Minister a short account of his personal history, a detailed and well thought-out account of the intentions and views of the Padcha and a political sketch of the present state of the Mughal Empire, considered in all its parts, and he added to them a "memoire" on the town and Souba of Tatta-Bakar, with some observations on the advantage of this acquisition and on the means required not only to secure but also to extend it. That is the principal object of the account which M. Madec has rendered to the Court. I did not wish to be named in it in order to leave him the credit for the negotiation and also not to bring misfortune on the affair. If it succeeds I shall be rewarded for my troubles by the advantage that the nation may draw out of it and by the pleasure that I shall feel in seeing such an important negotiation being concluded under the very nose of M. Chevalier without his having the least knowledge of it". We have already seen how modave had reason to complain of Chevalier's conduct towards him.

Let us next resume the course of the narrative contained in the letter to Bellecombe, dated May 1, 1777. Modave had soon reason to feel dissatisfied with the service of the Emperor, who was profuse in his promises but had neither the means nor the will to fulfil them. He never received even half the salary he was entitled to, and whenever he complained he was told that he should not worry about petty matters, that the Emperor had great schemes in his mind for him, either to send him to France as his Ambassador or to entrust to him the government of the province of Sirhind with a revenue of

60 lakhs of rupees, but Modave at once realised that with the small force at his command he could not even think of conquering Sirhind from the hands of the Sikhs. In his financial distress he wrote to Madec, who promptly replied that he would arrange with Najaf Khan to transfer the assignment of his salary to his own jagir. In order to finalise the transaction Modave started for Agra, with the reluctant consent of the Emperor and of his favourite minister, Abdul Ahad Khan, who was then a bitter rival to Najaf Khan. He stayed in Madec's camp for nearly five months, down to the siege of Dig, at the end of which finding his position no better he decided to quit and asked Madec to settle his accounts. Madec was in great financial embarrassment after his recent defeat at the hands of Rohillas, and could pay only 8,000 out of 32,000 rupees due to Modave. But he told Modave that he was shortly going back to Europe, and in compensation of the money due he would give him a part of his army, one Infantry battalion with artillery. Modave accepted the offer and wrote to the Emperor that he was returning to his service with a well-armed and well-trained force. He received letters of welcome from the Emperor and from the Minister, Abdul Ahad Khan, but as he was starting from Agra his arrangements were suddenly upset. Aument, who had, through the good offices of Modave, been placed in charge of the administration of Madec's jagir, now instigated the latter to take back the battalion he had given to Modave. Madec stopped Modave at Agra and demanded back his battalion on the ground that because of a recent communication from the Imperial Court he had decided to postpone his departure from India (March 1776). Modave felt it useless to return to Delhi alone and decided to take the route to Hyderabad in the hope of getting employment under Nizam Ali. He started from Agra on the 24th June, and travelling via Karauli, Kota, Mandasore, Ujjain, Burhanpur and Aurangabad and reached the capital of the Deccan.

On his arrival at Hyderabad Modave presented himself to Nizam Ali but met with disappointment because of the instigation of one of the nobles of the Court in the pay of the Madras Government. He then wrote to de Lalee and Basalat Jang from whom he received encouraging response. In the meantime a Deccani noble named Ibrahim Beg, who had joined the army of Nizam Ali, offered to place Modave in charge of his artillery and his sepoy force with some European officers on a monthly salary of 700 rupees. Modave accepted the offer as he wanted to remain at Hyderabad in the ultimate expectation of being taken in the service of Nizam Ali, but when he was asked to sign a long-term contract by Ibrahim Beg he threw up the offer and went to Adoni, where through the good offices of de Lalee he was given an appointment by Basalat Jang on a monthly salary of 600 rupees. Modave gave an interesting account

of the high state of discipline and efficiency in the camp of de Lalee. The only punishment for breach of discipline or negligence of duty was expulsion from the camp. De Lalee himself was not only a brave soldier and a good organiser of men but also a generous and cultured person, and Modave recollected having studied with him at the same school although de Lalee was most reluctant to speak about his parentage or place of birth.

Modave regarded his service under Basalat Jang as a purely temporary accommodation and hoped constantly to be able to find a better employment under Nizam Ali. He realised that the only way of attracting the notice of Nizam Ali was by organising a small corps of his own, well armed and trained in the European fashion. His main difficulty was lack of money with which to procure arms. In a letter to Moracin at Pondicherry dated 1st May 1777, he begged to be supplied with 800 guns on credit, promising to repay the entire amount in eighteen months.

In a second letter to Bellecombe, written from Sangi near Adni and dated like the first one May 1, 1777, Modave referred to an interesting interview he had with the Chief Minister of Nizam Ali a few days after his arrival at Hyderabad. The Minister told him that in spite of the pressure of the English against employing any Frenchman in his service, Nizam Ali was willing to offer an appointment to Modave if the latter could give him service in the manner he wanted, and in this connexion the Minister enquired if Modave could raise a corps of European troops. Modave replied that "there was a large number of discontented and ill-paid men dispersed here and there, who would not fail to join me as soon as they came to know that I was in a position to receive them," but he could render greater service than merely collecting a number of vagabonds. He would "form a corps of sepoys, supported by a good artillery and led by white officers." He was then told that although the English and the French were at peace, he would be required to fight against the English if the Nawab broke with them, to which Modave replied that "from the moment I would be in his service his enemies would be mine". Next the Minister complained that while Nizam Ali had been trying for years to open a correspondence with Pondicherry and had even written to France he had not received any response to his overtures. He asked if Modave could help in transmitting a letter from Nizam Ali to the King of France and in getting a satisfactory reply, to which Modave said that he "was not properly qualified to undertake a mission of that sort". Besides it would be irregular to address a letter directly to the king when there was at Pondicherry a General of the highest rank and "depository of the authority and confidence of His Majesty". He assured the Minister that the new



Governor would give a prompt and favourable reply. Modave then wrote "This conversation was in the form of an interrogation. All my replies were written down and stamped with my seal and later this report was sent to the Nawab, but I have not heard anything further about it." He was, however, left with an impression at this interview that if he had a corps of troops under him he would have been immediately given an employment by Nizam Ali, and that is why he implored Bellecombe to give him a letter of recommendation and to induce Moracin to send him the guns he required. As regards the political attitude of Nizam Ali, Modave wrote: "It is certain that this Prince has a sentiment of affection and preference for the French nation, but the great power of the English on the Coromandel coast and the little response he has found from Pondicherry have benumbed this good will". It was this disappointment added to the fact that Bellecombe had sent this letter announcing his assumption of Government at Pondicherry through de Lalee, who was in the service of his enemy, although a brother, namely Basalat Jang, and not direct by a personal Wakil which explained why Nizam Ali had not replied to him. So Modave asked Bellecombe to send a second letter of notification to Nizam Ali which he would personally hand over to him, and with it another letter recommending him for a suitable employment under Nizam Ali. He assured Bellecombe that he was moved not merely by his personal interest but also by the interest of the nation, and begged him to persuade Moracin to supply him with the guns he required to form a corps of his own.

In another letter to Bellecombe, dated Sangi, 24th. June, 1777, Modave gave an account of the war between Haider Ali and a combination of the Marathas, Nizam Ali and Basalat Jang. Basalat Jang and Nizam Ali had fared badly and were looking for an opportunity to make peace with Haider Ali. Modave suggested that Bellecombe should act as a mediator and thus enhance the prestige and influence of France in the Deccan. In a second letter of the same date he informed Bellecombe that he was sending in enclosure copies of the letter from the Emperor of Delhi to the King of France and that of Abdul Ahad Khan to M.de Sartine in connexion with the Tatta project, regarding which Madec had already written to France.<sup>4</sup>

In a third letter of the same date Modave repeated his request to Bellecombe to send him a letter of recommendation for employment under Nizam Ali, and also a clever and intelligent Brahmin to serve as Wakil. He also enquired if the rumour of the arrival of Saint-Lubin at Poona was true. He knew Saint-Lubin personally and expected complete success in his mission.

<sup>4</sup>/Unfortunately, however, these enclosures are not preserved in the Pondicherry Archives.

From a note addressed to de Lalee, dated 10th July, 1777, we learn that Bellecombe sent a letter to Modave for Nizam Ali dealing with the order of the King "to establish the old contact and friendship which existed before between our nation and the princes of the House of Nizamul-Mulk". But there is no document to show whether Modave presented the letter to Nizam Ali and with what result. All that is known is that Modave suddenly fell ill and retired to Masulipatam where he died on the 22nd December, 1777<sup>5</sup>. We further know from a letter of Bellecombe to the Chief of the French Factory at Masulipatam, dated 16th January, 1778, that the English at Masulipatam refused to accord funeral honours to Modave commensurate with his rank<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Dec. no. 5180-Catalogue des Manuscrits des Ancienncrs Archives de L'Inde Française, VI (Extract from the Register of Deaths at Masulipatam).

<sup>6</sup> Dec. no. 288, *Ibid.* I.

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## A FRENCH ACCOUNT OF COMMERCE IN INDIA IN 1774

[By R. C. Mitra]

In the Archives of Pondicherry one frequently comes across reports and memoirs submitted by French Officers to the Government at home. Drawn with the obvious intention of convincing the home Government of the feasibility of an expedition in India, these documents dwell mainly on the political position of the European establishments in India. But sometimes they refer incidentally to trade conditions which have greater interest for us. The aim of the present article is to draw attention to a survey of the commercial resources of India in 1774, as contained in a document which treats primarily with the relative position of the European Colonies in India. The document<sup>1</sup> is dated at Pondicherry on the 20th of December 1774. Though there is no mention of the author, he was presumably some French officer whose general accuracy of information is however well attested by his political review, of which the present account forms part.

The commercial survey begins with Tata (Thatta in Sind) and Bacar probably because the French at this time considered the possibility of an expedition to India starting from these supposed vantage points. According to this report, "Thatta and Bakar and the region of Asmir (Ajmere?) abound in wheat, barley, cattle and pasture lands. Multan provides only horses camels and the best wool of the land. The district of Delhy is extremely fertile in all sorts of grain. The district of Agra yields less of rice but it possesses extensive commerce in textile, silk and gold and silver lace-work. Lahore furnishes textiles, carpets, (plain or with floral designs) silk and rock-salt. The region of Benares abounds in vegetables and grain of all varieties. Very fine muslins, gold and silver threads, turbans and waist bands highly prized throughout the East, are manufactured there. One can find there the superb woollen stuff of Kashmir. Patna, Bengal, Dacca and the adjoining regions abound in cotton and muslin, plain and embroidered, and of all varieties. One buys here opium, borax, sugar, rice, wheat, manufactured silk and salt-petre. Not only Patna offers the largest quantity of opium and the best, but one finds there rhubarb and musk which are imported from Tibet. The region generally known as the suba of Bengal carries on a considerable amount of commerce with the neighbouring

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<sup>1</sup> No. 201 of the Manuscripts in the Archives of Pondicherry.

peoples, specially with Assam. The commerce with Assam consists principally in carrying there 20,000 to 25,000 tons of salt every year at a profit of 5 or 6 per cent. This commerce also comprises gold, silver, ivory, musk, aloes-wood, gum, lac and silk (The golden silk is not that crude stuff used for the manufacture of Mandagovttes<sup>2</sup> which serve for the dress of Indians). This commerce has to be carried on by the Indians or in their name, for the people of Assam do not like to have anything to do with the Europeans. At Cuttack which abounds in all kinds of grain there are several merchants who carry on external trade with Maldives where they send rice clothes of rougher quality, and silk, and receive in exchange 'cowries' and amber. The 'cowries' are small shells which serve as small coins in Bengal and are also much in demand by the negroes of the Guinea coast where they are exported by the Europeans.

Excepting this commerce with the Maldives, Assam and the neighbouring regions, which is still carried on by the people of Northern India, Bengal, Benares and Patna, the people are not in the habit of carrying the wealth of their country to other countries. They are occupied in manufacturing commodities and in supplying them as cargo for the European vessels.

The entire country comprised under the name of the Deccan generally abounds in cotton, textiles, plants necessary for dyeing, and salt. They manufacture white cloths, dyed cloths and cloths with coloured design of all varieties, muslin, handkerchiefs and gingham. The Deccan is one of the regions which specialise in furnishing the most beautiful products in large quantity.

The area known as the Northern Deccan, that is to say the region to the north of the Krishna and even the Condavir furnishes the most beautiful and the finest cloths. These are frequently printed or dyed but these have seldom painted designs. In this part of the country are also manufactured, dimity, gingham and the handkerchiefs which are the finest and best in respect of quality of thread, texture and their dye. The interior of this region produces a large quantity of rice and wheat, and the wheat of Golconda is the best in Hindusthan. This kingdom offers a lucrative branch of commerce in diamonds which are the finest in the world but the cost of mining must have been undoubtedly excessive for the mines are now practically abandoned.

The Carnatic produces lesser quantity of rice and food crops than are promised by the area and fertility of its soil. Cultivation is neglected here and the greater part of the limited population that

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<sup>2</sup>Tamil word for the under clothes of women.

still lingers there is employed in manufactures. The people do not manufacture any other form of fine cloths except what is intended for being painted in varied colour of gold or silver. The other cloths are all dyed and are used by the local people. They manufacture large quantity of handkerchiefs of every quality, gingham, dimity of all varieties, and rough muslin. It is principally in Madras that the finest painted clothes are made, their colour is of the gayest, the designs are finely executed, and the colouring matter being of the finest quality the paintings last longest. In Madras and its neighbourhood are produced superb handkerchiefs, superior even to those of Palicat. Cuddalore produces the finest dimity. The Carnatic supplies a large quantity of salt and so does Tanjore which was the granary of the Coromandel coast.

In the district of Tanjore the author of this report records the same misery that he observed in the Carnatic. Yet he remarks that the extensive and excellent cultivation of this region had not previously prevented the development of various manufactures. The inhabitants used to produce an immense quantity of cloths, inferior to those of the North, but infinitely cheaper. A large quantity of ginghams, dimity, rough muslin and handkerchiefs were also manufactured. Madura, Morava and Tondaiman, also produced rice and a large measure of rougher clothes for the use of common people.

The external commerce of the Coromandel is absolutely in the hands of Europeans with the exception of a few Choulis of Naour, Porto Novo and Orissa who make their ventures to Achem, Pegu, Mergui, Siam, and Ceylon. They employ, for these voyages boats of 100 to 400 tons. Lead, iron, copper and rugs, bought from the Europeans, along with indigenous clothes and cotton serve in payment of wood, arrack, cardamom and elephants etc., which are sought for in these territories. They also go to Ceylon in search of dried fish, wood, and arrack and the voyages are made in boats of 20 to 40 tons.

The products of the Malabar coast consist principally of pepper, cardamom, sandal, teak and Bith wood, cinnamon (much inferior to that of Ceylon), ginger, cotton etc. The Banians, Armenians, Jews and Arabs settled on this coast once used to carry on an extensive commerce with the Indian Archipelago, Siam, Arakan, Pegu, Bengal, Coromandel, the Persian gulf, the Red sea and even the east coast of Africa. But now this commerce is absolutely in the hands of Europeans. The old regions and their inhabitants are restricted to internal trade and coastal trade only. Still everyday the European establishments are encroaching on their only means of independent

trade. The commercial survey is concluded with a mournful speculation on the trading possibilities of the Marathas in the west coast, if only they had not been entirely occupied in piracy. In that case "Chaoul, Daboul, Narzapour, Gueriah, Moulloudy etc., would become respectable marts and Surat could recover the ancient splendour which has declined for several years."

"But the troubles of the Delhi court, the Marhatta invasion, the preponderance acquired by Europeans, the brigandage of the Angriaes, and the form of sovereign control exercised there (in Surat) by the English have all contributed to the disappearance of this grand mart of all the nations."

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## FATEH NAMA GURU KHALSA JI KA

[By Sita Ram Kohli]

This manuscript comprises three long ballads composed by one Ganesh Das to celebrate the three important victories won by the Sikhs over the Pathans, namely the victory at Multan in 1818 A.D., near Tiri hills (Naushehra) in 1823, and at Saidu near Akora on the banks of the river Lunda in 1827.

The script is Gurmukhi, but the language is what may be described as the Panjabised form of Western Hindi. Here and there, we also come across Urdu and Persian words and also words and expressions used in the Oudhi Hindi. A few of the English and French military terms which had found their way to the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh also occur in these ballads.

The form and style adopted by Ganesh Das in his compositions is that of the classical Hindi bardic poets like Chandr Bardai and Bhushan. Like them, he has used the Soratha, Sawayya, Doha, Kabbita and Chaupai. Though not so often or so frequently, as in the poems of Bhushan, yet we do come across, in Ganesh Das's compositions the use of ounamatapoeic words and expressions and here and there a pen-picture of feelings of joy or anger, courage or fear. But he is essentially a Panjabi poet and his language is what may be described as the Panjabised form of Western Hindi both in regard to choice of words and grammatical construction. Ganesh Das styles himself as Pingal. Beyond this, he does not tell us anything about himself nor have I come across any other work of this poet. It is also difficult to say to which part of the Punjab he belonged. The use of a few words which are peculiar to the dialect of the districts of Shahpur or Jhang would not justify the inference that Ganesh Das hailed from the West Punjab. What was the Poet's source of living is equally uncertain. I do not find Ganesh Das's name among those of the upper grade employees of the Government—the lists of these names which are in my possession were prepared after the examination of no less than 2,50,000 administrative papers of the Lahore Durbar (1810-49 A.D.). But the very minute events which he has mentioned in his composition leave no doubt in my mind that Ganesh Das had free access to the Court. May be that he was one of the many Bhayyas who were expected to be twenty-four hours near and about the person of Ranjit Singh and

were often employed on special errands and were borne on the personal establishment of the Maharaja and paid out of the *Sarf-i-Huzur* or his personal expenses.

The ballad relating to the Multan Yuddha is the longest of the three. It comprises 277 couplets and is divided into five *adhyas*, or cantos. Each *adhya* ends with a definite stage in the progress of the battle. The first *adhya* gives us the story of the fall of the walled town of Multan and the retiring of the Nawab within the citadel. The Sikh forces are then detailed by their General Misar Diwan Chand, with a view to besiege the fort. They dug up trenches, threw earth-works and also ran a couple of mines. The Nawab was given the option of retiring from the fort of Multan to the town and fort of Shujabad (twenty-three miles south of Multan) where he would be left unmolested and in lieu of the loss of Multan he was promised a decent Jagir by the Maharaja. But he declined to accept the offer. "To die with honour was a thousand times better than to live with disgrace"—the aged Nawab observed in reply.

The siege then began in right earnest and both sides staked their all. Ganesh Das gives a lively pen-picture of the various encounters which were fought between the advancing columns of the Lahore troops and the grim defenders of the fort. The siege was prolonged and the issue of the battle became doubtful. The summer season too had advanced. Multan becomes hot like a furnace in the month of June. The Maharaja personally looked to the regular and unfailing supply of the munitions of war from Lahore and kept on encouraging his troops with hopes and promises of rich rewards. When the issue of the battle was hanging in the balance, the poet introduces the divine element. The Muslim saints of Multan send a deputation under Shams Tabrez, the holiest of them all, to Guru Gobind Singh at his residence in the Paradise. The Pir pleads the Muslim cause and requests the Sikh Guru to withdraw his forces and let the Muslim rule continue in Multan for another two years. But the Guru was adamant and is represented by the poet to have personally come all the way from Paradise to render help to his followers. The tables then turned. The last assault made by the Sikhs carried every thing before it. The two "Suicidal Columns" led by their intrepid leaders Sadhu Singh Nihang and Fateh Singh Dutta rushed through the breaches and fell upon the garrison with the suddenness of lightening. The aged Nawab with a number of his kinsmen fell fighting near the Khizri gate of his palace and the surviving members of the family surrendered themselves to the victors.



The conquest of Multan (June 1818) brought a considerable accession to the territorial possessions of Ranjit Singh as also to his revenue resources. The province was estimated to yield an annual income of Rs. 7,00,000. This was the second great victory of the Sikhs over the Pathans—the first being that of Haidro five years ago, when the great Wazir Fateh Khan Barakzai of Kabul was obliged to quit the field after suffering heavy losses and leaving the occupation of the strategic fort of Attock in the hands of Ranjit Singh. Besides enhancing the military prestige of the Sikhs, these two victories gave to the ruler of Lahore a commanding position in respect of the two great routes which ran from Central Asia to India. The northern route passed through Khyber, Peshawar and Attock; and the southern route entered India at Multan and passed on to Lahore via Pakpattan and to Delhi via Bhatinda.

The victory of Ranjit Singh over Mohammad Azim Khan of Kabul (younger brother of the late Wazir Fateh Khan) forms the subject matter of the second ballad called "Peshawar Yuddha". This ballad has 111 couplets. This was the third great battle between the Afghans and the Sikhs which was fought in March 1823 near Naushehra and in which the heads of the two governments namely of Kabul and Lahore were present in person. Since 1813, Ranjit Singh was steadily extending his dominions westward beyond Attock and in 1818 he had even seized Peshawar from Mohammad Azim's younger brothers and had rendered them tributaries of the Lahore Darbar. Azim Khan was smarting under the disgrace which his brothers Yar Mohammad and Sultan Mohammad had brought on the family by accepting the vassalage of Ranjit Singh. He had therefore come prepared to settle the issue in a fight to the end. Unfortunately for him, however, the fight ended in favour of the Sikhs and Mohammad Azim Khan took his defeat to heart so much so that he expired within two months of his disastrous retreat from Naushehra.

Ganesh Das gives a faithful description of the battle which was fought near the hills of Tiri during the evening hours of the 14th day of March. We are told how the Afghans had taken initial advantage over the Sikhs by occupying the tops of a couple of mounds and blocked their further progress in the direction of Naushehra and Peshawar. In their first endeavour to dislodge the enemy from his entrenched position, the Sikhs had suffered serious reverses and set-backs and had lost a dozen or so of their best soldiers and officers like Baba Phoola Singh, Sardar Garbha Singh and the Gurkha Captain Balbhadra. "A Sikh soldier", observes the poet, "was not sure of even the small piece of ground under his feet".

The rank and file had lost their morale and but for the sustained efforts of the Maharaja himself which he made for restoring confidence in his men, it was likely that the Sikhs would have left the field greatly humiliated. The forty-three years old Maharaja donned his armour, took sword and spear in hand, mounted his favourite steed and rode forward to give lead to his soldiers. This ultimately turned the scales in favour of the Lahore troops. A general assault was ordered from one side, whereas from the other the bombardment of the position of the enemy was taken in hand by Prince Sher Singh who was posted with his artillery across the Lundah river. Azim Khan's advance from Peshawar towards Naushehra was kept in check by the Maharaja's European Officers namely Allard and Ventura. The Afghans lost their nerve but kept on the fight for a little while till they got an opportunity to run away under the cover of darkness. The Maharaja then proceeded to Peshawar where he held public Darbar and on Yar Mohammad's expressing sincere regret he was forgiven and reinstalled in the Government of Peshawar as the nominee of the Lahore Darbar.

The third and the last of this series of ballads contain only 73 couplets. It narrates the story of the *Jehad* (religious war) declared against the Sikhs by Khalifa Sayyad Ahmad 1827. Originally a resident of Bareilly, Sayyad Ahmad had come to live amongst the Afghans and had succeeded in gaining influence over the tribesmen of Hazara, Swat and Yusufzai hills and posed as the "deliverer of Islam from the thralldom of the followers of Gobind Singh". He reminded them of their glorious past when their rule had extended over the Punjab, Sirhand and Delhi and blamed and taunted them for having surrendered all that to the Sikhs. He thus worked their frenzy to the bursting point and the whole country from Attock to Peshawar was up in arms. This made Ranjit Singh apprehensive about his possessions in the trans-Indus region. Even his own nominee Yar Mohammad Khan was persuaded to throw in his lot with the Khalifa.

Ganesh Das narrates all the important incidents which happened during the period of two months of the disturbances: the unexpected night-attack made on the rather exposed position of Sardar Budh Singh Sindhanwalia's small division and the brave and courageous stand taken by the Sardar; Budh Singh's retirement next morning to a safer and better fortified place near the fort of Jahangira; the second attack delivered by the Afghans on the fortified position of the Lahore troops by pouring down in large numbers through the narrow and unfrequented pass of the Gidaragalla. The Sikh troops resorted to defensive measures and decided to bide their time till

help came from Lahore. The Khalifa got wind of their plans and hastened to launch his attack before fresh troops could come to Budh Singh's assistance. Sardar was able to keep his wits about him. He now resorted to his armoury of diplomacy and succeeded in weaning away Yar Mohammad Khan and a few others from their alliance with the Khalifa. They treacherously advised him to run away from the field if he wanted to save his life which he did. This rendered it possible for the trained Sikh troops to overpower the untrained military of the Afghans. "The battalefield of the village Saidu", the poet observes "was strewn with dead and wounded. The fleeing Afghans were massacred in thousands and an equally large number was drowned in the rapid waters of the rivulet which flowed close to the village."

The victorious Khalsa then moved to Peshawar where Yar Mohammad Khan came, paid homage to Prince Sher Singh and begged forgiveness for having joined the Khalifa. Ranjit Singh was not yet ready to take possession of this un-remunerative province and lock up a huge force to keep the Pathan in proper subjection. Yar Mohammad was once again given charge of the province of Peshawar and the Sikh troops returned to Lahore.

In composing these ballads, the poet seems to have been inspired by patriotic and religious motives. Whenever he finds an occasion, he tries to impress upon his reader that any one who recites or listens to the recitation of these valiant deeds of his bretheren will be rewarded with the usual divine graces of Dharm, Arth, Kama and Moksha. It may also be mentioned in this connection that, although Ganesh Das was inspired by feelings of love for his own people, he is not unjust to the enemy. He has not used a bitter or a scornful word or expression for them nor has he underrated the valour and the military skill of the Afghans.

The historical value of these ballads, is, indeed, great. I have compared the details as well as the order and sequence of events as given by Ganesh Das with those embodied in the books written by the Court historians like Sohan Lal and Diwan Amar Nath, and I was happy to find that all what he has said was confirmed by one or another of the contemporary writers. His accuracy is unchallengable. Nor does any one else give such a detailed and full-some account of the battles as given by Ganesh Das. His ballads have raised in my general estimation the value of bardic literature as a dependable source of contemporary history. His description of the siege of Multan; the encounters with the forces of Khalifa Sayyad Ahmad on the bank of the Lunda river and again of the

fierce encounters which the Sikhs had to fight at Tiri against the Afghans, leaves an impression on the mind of the reader that the poet was present near the scene of action. The actors in these frightful dramas are made to file off before our eyes one after another and we fancy we can still hear the cry of Wah Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wah Guru Ji Ki Fateh—the cry with which they used to encourage their comrades-in-arms at the time of an onslaught.

The pity is that the writer of the ballad has not cared to tell us anything about himself. Like the Hindu writers of yore, Ganesh Das seems to have been a believer in the principle of self-abnegation.

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# A TIRUCHIRÂPALLI GRANT OF VIJAYA RANGA CHOKKANÂTHA OF MADHURAI

(By K. R. Venkataraman]

The Copper Plate discussed in this short paper was in the archives<sup>1</sup> of the Darvâr office of the former Pudukkottai State, and records a grant of Vijaya Ranga Chokkanâtha Nâyaka (1706-1732) of the Madhurai<sup>2</sup> Nâyaka line. It is dated *sâka* 1644—*asviĵa* (*Bahula*), corresponding to October 1722 (lines 1-2). Lines 3-6 mention Venkatadeva Mahâ Āya—obviously Venkata IV of Vijayanagar—with some of his imperial titles as ruling the world seated on his jewelled throne in Ghanagiri (Penukonda). Lines 7-9 mention that Vijaya Ranga Chokkanâtha Nāyanayya vāru, belonging to the *Kāsyapa Gotra*, *Yajus askha* is a son of Ranga Krishna Muttuvirappa Nāyanavāru (1632-89) and grandson of Chokkanâtha Nāyana vāru (1659-1682) of the line of Visvanâtha Nāyana (Nâyaka). Mā'appa, son (?) of Sūrappa Nā'ḍu had endowed lands in Kattalūr and Perāmbūr<sup>3</sup> which he had *bought*, for the daily service in the shrines of Sūra Pillaiyār (Gaṇesa) and Vira Durgā (lines 10-14), which was conducted under the supervision of two *pandārams* (Saivite monks). When an inquiry was made the *pandārams* were found to have neglected the daily services, and a royal order was issued to Mārappa to see to their proper and regular performance (lines 15-17). Matters did not improve, and the king summoned the residents of the locality, and in their presence settled upon Mā'appa two additional villages Koṭṭappaṭṭu and Kolakāṭṭu-paṭṭi<sup>4</sup> for the better performance of the temple services (lines 20-32). The royal signature and that of the writer, Rāyasam Ramalingayya follow (lines 33-34) with the usual verse that one who fosters and perpetuates a gift has greater merit than the donor (lines 34-36).

This grant, followed by another<sup>5</sup> in *Saka* 1649 (A.D. 1727) to the *pandāram* of the same temple, bears out Nelson's observation<sup>6</sup> that this Ruler 'seems to have been principally distinguished by the extraordinary and illregulated munificence of his gifts to Brahmans churches and religious institutions'. It is further said of him that even 'when he was told that the presents of jewellery and other gifts he had made on a previous occasion were all missing, he would not do so much as institute an enquiry into the malversation, but would repeat his donations'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Before the merger of the State, the present writer had suggested the sending of the Plate to the State Museum. The file in the Durbar office relating to this plate bore the number D. Dis. 2731/38.

<sup>2</sup>Spelling approved by the Government. *Madhurai* (Madura); *Tirūchirāpalli* (Trichinopoly).

<sup>3</sup>Villages in the former Pudukkottai State.

<sup>4</sup>Now *inām* villages in the Tiruchirapalli taluk.

<sup>5</sup>Noticed by Sewell (C.P. No. 44)—*List of Antiquities Madras* Vol. II.

<sup>6</sup>*The Madura country* p. 240.

<sup>7</sup>Sathianatha Aiyar, R: *History of the Nayaks of Madura* P. 230 (quoting Taylor: *Oriental Historical Manuscripts*).

These shrines are close to the southern ramparts of the fort (now dismantled) of Tiruchirāpalli. Sūrappa and Mārappa, both *Naidus* (*Nayaks*), were evidently officers connected with the administration of the Fort area.

The grant raises the important question *when did Sūrappa acquire the lands in Kattalūr and Perāmbūr*? These two villages were the head-quarters of a *pālayam*, one of those created in the 16th century, by Visvanātha Nāyaka, the founder of the line. The territory held by the Chief was a fief over which he exercised all the rights of administration including the maintenance of law and order, and for the enjoyment of this position of prestige and authority, he paid the Nāyaka a tribute of about a third of his income from land and maintained an army for the service of the king. The *pālayakkār* (Polegar) therefore could not have alienated the lands in his own headquarters, since no part of a *pālayam* was alienable, though the king might, if he chose, dispossess a *pālayakkār* and bestow his territory on another. To find the proper answer to the question, it is necessary to recapitulate here some incidents, not generally known, in the history of the reign of this Nāyaka, that are told in the letters of *La Mission de Madure* and the old records of the Pudukkottai State, based on which the history<sup>1</sup> of the State for this period has been written. These incidents will throw much new light on the character of the reign.

Through some insidious intrigue, the Chief of Perāmbur-Kattalūr fell into disgrace in the court of Rāni Mangammāl, Regent (1689-1706) during the minority of Vijaya Ranga Chokkanātha and was finally deprived of his *pālayam* about 1707, by the young Ruler, who gave it as a personal appanage to Namana Tondaimān of Kolattūr, the younger brother of Raghunātha Rāya Tondaimān, the founder of the Pudukkottai State. Namana was a favourite of the Nāyaka, and the tenure under which he held the Perāmbūr Kattalūr tract was different from that of a *pālayakkār*. The alienation in favour of Sūrappa must therefore have been made *after 1707 by Namana himself or with his consent*.

The neighbouring chiefs, the Lakkayya (Lakki) Nāyakas of Kumaravādi and the Buchayya (Buchi) Nāyakas of Murangāpuri were in close alliance with the Perāmbūr Kattalūr chiefs, and by 1711 the Tondaimān brothers had subjugated them for the Madhurai Nāyaka.

At that time the Madhurai Kingdom was exposed to dangers, both internal and external, that threatened its very existence. Chikka deva Rāya of Mysore had nibbled away the northern districts of the kingdom, and in 1696, sent his *dalavāi* Kumarayya to lay siege to the fort of Tiruchirāpalli. A sudden incursion of the Marathas into the Mysore country necessitated the recall of the *dalavāi*, which saved Tiruchirāpalli from the horrors and privations of a prolonged siege. The threat from Mysore had not completely passed, when in the east Raghunātha Tevar, better known as Kilavan Setupati, declared the independence of Ramnad which comprised the eastern districts of the Kingdom. Kilavan Setupati, who had once captured Madhurai, was again spoiling for a fight until his death. The hostility of the Marātha Ruler of Tanjore and the Maravars of Ramnad menaced the kingdom on the east. To add to these troubles some of the lesser *pālayakkārs* were in open revolt. Manucci mentions a letter that Rāni Mangammāl wrote to Daud Klān on

<sup>1</sup>See the present writer's *A Manual of the Pudukkottai State*—Vol. II Part I—History.

April 20, 1702, soliciting help to quell 'the prince of Arupaliam' (Udayar-palayam), who in league with the Chiefs of Ariyalur Turaiyur and Valikandapuram, all situated to the north of Tiruchirāpalli, refused payment of tribute to the Nāyaka. Raghunātha Rāya Tondaimān marched at the head of a Nāyaka force, and brought these pālayākkars under subjection.

The liquidation of the perāmbūr-Kattalūr chiefship was the starting point for the subjugation of a number of lesser chiefships that formed a hostile ring round Tiruchirāpalli, the pivotal centre of the defence of the kingdom.

Vijaya Ranga Chokkanātha shared his great ancestor Tirumala Nāyaka's strength of religious convictions and love of charity, but lacked the latter's ability and statesmanship. He was easily imposed upon by his avaricious and corrupt ministers and *dalavāis* whom he could not keep under check. The rot had set in, and none but an outstanding genius could save the tottering State Madhurai. Poor Vijaya Ranga Chokkanātha was not equal to the task before him but it is palpably unfair to characterise him, as Nelson has done probably on insufficient grounds, as 'a vain, weak-minded Prince, utterly unfitted to govern either himself or others'. The foregoing facts will not fail to present him in a better light, and convince the reader that Vijaya Ranga Chokkanātha was no *faineant*, and the energy and alacrity that he displaced in quelling the turbulent pālayakkārs round about Tiruchirāpalli saved the State for about quarter of a century and might have prolonged its existence for a further period, had not Bāngāru Nāyaka opposed the claims of Rāni Minākshi to the throne and Chandā Sāheb's intrigues abruptly terminated the line of Madhurai Nāyaks.

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# NOTES ON COMMUNICATIONS IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

(By Arun Kumar Das Gupta)

The Old English Correspondence volumes available at the Bankura District Record Office give us some idea of the means of communication prevailing in the early nineteenth century. Although we do not derive sufficient information to be able to form a clear picture of the system of communication as a whole, we are none the less in a position to throw light on the Government's attitude to the existing means of communication.

Among the various means of conveyance which prevailed during the time of Akbar, Moreland mentions carts, pack animals, the palanquin, the ekka and the gari for use on land and boats and ships for use on water. (India at the death of Akbar—Moreland pp. 166-167). There is no reason to believe that the system underwent any fundamental change until the introduction of the rail-road in the middle of the nineteenth century. In connection with a report on the Government Sarais 'Carts and Cattle laden with property' have been mentioned (Letter to the Offg. Secretary, Government Judicial Dept. dated, 1833). The elaborate regulations relating to the Ferry, which appear in another letter (from Chief Secretary to Government to Acting Superintendent of Police in Lower Provinces, dated 1819), reveal that boats still served as a very important means of conveyance. Further from a letter from the Jt. Magistrate, Bankura to the Junior Secretary, Government of Bengal, Judicial Department, dated, August, 1846, we get the information that boats were used in large numbers for transportation of coal.

The construction of metalled roads and the introduction of the railways in the middle of the nineteenth century revolutionised the means of communication in India. But even at the pre-rail stage the British Government took care to improve the existing means of conveyance and established some sort of supervisory control over them. This point can be established without difficulty.

In a letter from the Chief Secretary to Government to Actg. Superintendent of Police in Lower Provinces (1819) a number of regulations relating to the Ferry have been stated. First, the Superintendent of Police is to be in charge of Communication between Government and Magistrates and Jt. Magistrates. Secondly, Magistrates



and Jt. Magistrates are authorised to limit extend the exemptions, regulate the number. They are further given the power of appointment and promulgation of new laws. Thirdly, regarding public, interferences of magistrates are to be of Police. Majhees, who endanger life and property of boats in order or overburdening may be punished. Ferries are generally exempted from payment of any tax to the Government. This regulation is intended mainly for "the efficiency of the Police and the safety and convenience of the community". Fifthly, no ferries are to be assessed on account of toll except such as after providing fully for the safety and convenience of the public, and securing a liberal remuneration for the person in charge may appear to be so productive as to warrant the demand of a share of the profits for Government which share is extensively to be employed in repairing and constructing roads, bridges and drains, and otherwise, in facilitating the transit of property and the convenience of travellers. Sixthly, very few and the most productive ferries are to be taxed and even then the objects are to be explained to remove unpopularity. Seventhly, persons in charge of the public ferries are to be requested to pass free of tolls troops with military stores and baggages, native police officers and bonafide public servants.

Evidently the authorities intended to extend their control over the Ferry without causing any damage to a profitable source of revenue which it was. The income derived from this source was again employed, as stated in regulation No. 5, in "repairing and constructing roads, bridges and drains, and otherwise in facilitating the transit of property and the convenience of travellers".

Further, from a letter addressed to the Offg. Secretary, Government Judicial Department, dated 1833, we come to know that Sarais, both official and non-official, occupied an important position in the system of communication. It appears that the Sarais were built along the New Road, "the great medium of communication between the Presidency and the Upper Provinces", the safety of which was "of the utmost importance". "The primary object of the Government Surraes was to afford travellers in general, a nocturnal asylum free of expense." They were "well adapted.....to accommodate travellers of every persuasion, and particularly to protect the property of merchants frequenting the New Road.....". "All the Government surraes were apparently similar in construction.....the enclosure between the outer and inner wall and the square in the middle affording a safe position for carts and cattle, laden with property. They were generally safe from dacoits. In case they were attacked

"its inmates and the adjoining chuttee would be alarmed ere the Robbers would gain access within the walls". In the District of Damghur about 100/150 persons resorted to each sarai every night. Although the pilgrims generally frequented the Government sarais where they existed, the traveller in comfortable circumstances had the option of putting up at a moodie's shop. The needy travellers were very often compelled to sleep under the trees as they could not "afford the usual charge made by the Moodies of 1 pice for lodging and fire-wood, exclusive of the price of food". The Government Sarais were put under the supervision of the Dy. Postmasters of the Districts.

The sarais and the chuttees were thus institutions of immense value because they greatly facilitated long distance movement of goods and persons. But that was not enough. The full utilisation of the means of communication depended on an essential pre-condition *viz.* security in the countryside. That the Government was aware of this situation is proved by the fact that the Superintendent of Police was put in charge of communication between Government and Magistrates and Jt. Magistrates (Ferry regulation No. 1).

One peculiar feature of the letters available at the Bankura Record Office is that a large number of them, especially those of Mr. Blunt, the Collector of Bankura, refer to continuous and widespread lawlessness. In spite of numerous expeditions undertaken by the authorities the disturbances continued. This was partly due to the turbulence of the local inhabitants but partly again to the inefficiency of the local police. The Jt. Magistrate of Gurbeytah writes in course of a letter (dated, 1847) to the Jt. Magistrate of Bankura that the local police-men, some of whom were Jaygeerdars, were totally inefficient. Moreover, according to him, they themselves were always perpetrators of the numerous crimes committed in the Thannah of Bissenpore. The evidence of the convictions during the year 1846 indicate that these policemen were definitely in league with the "Dacoits and Budmashes"; when such was the condition of law and order in the countryside can it not be reasonably inferred that the travellers and the merchants and the pilgrims could hardly utilise to the full even the small facilities provided by the Ferry, the New Road and the Sarais?

# GANGADHAR SHASTRI

(By Dr. Kalikinkar Datta)

In a paper read at the Twenty-third session of the Indian Historical Records Commission, Rao Bahadur Sardar M. V. Kibe discussed the identity of Gangadhar Shastri, income of whose territorial property of some villages in U.P. was utilised for the establishment of the Agra College. Recently I managed to secure through Pandit Vishnulal Shastri, a Research Assistant of mine, transcripts of some old papers from village Kachari<sup>1</sup> in the Aurangabad sub-division of Gaya district in Bihar which show that Pandit Gangadhar Shastri was an inhabitant of this village. These papers were found in the possession of the descendants of Pandit Gangadhar Shastri, who are still residing in this village. I have selected for study here only those few which are of historical interest.

Gangadhar Shastri was born in the middle of the eighteenth century. He completed his Sanskrit studies at Nadia in Bengal and acquired considerable proficiency in astrology. His fame in this respect reached the Gwalior *darbar* through one Bhau Bakshi and one Abha Chitnavis, the latter being an inhabitant of Gwalior, then employed in the service of the Nawab of Daudnagar (Gaya district) and he was appointed there on a handsome remuneration of Rs. 5,000 (a month<sup>2</sup>). Daulat Rao Sindhia granted him seven villages in Eglas *taluk* in Aligarh district rent-free as a reward for some propitious astrological performances by him to the interest of the Sindhia.<sup>3</sup>

On the death of Gangadhar Shastri, the Company's Government decided that one-fourth of the income from his property in Eglas *taluk* amounting to Rs. 2,589 would go to his heirs and three-fourths amounting to Rs. 7,767 were to be utilised for "*public and charitable purposes*"<sup>4</sup>. It is clear<sup>5</sup> that the latter amount was "afterwards appropriated to the use of the college at Agra."

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(1) *Vide* Appendix.

(2) Appendix 'A'.

(3) Appendix 'B'.

(4) Appendix (G).

(5) Appendix 'H', and Fisher's Memoir quoted. \*

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\* Sharp, Selections from Educational Records Part I, ps. 185-186.

## APPENDIX A

*Copy of the appointment letter from Maharaja Madho Rao  
Sindhia of Gwalior*

“स्वस्ति श्री-सर्वोपरि वीराजमान सकल-गुणनिधान वेदशास्त्र संपन्न राज्य मान्य राज्ये श्री-श्री पंडित गंगाधरजी जोग्य-लीणा श्री मंत महाराज माधौ राव संधिया-बहादुर का अनेक साष्टांग दंड प्रणाम प्राप्त होय अत्र कुशल तत्रास्तु आगे वृत्तांत आपका सविस्तार भाउ बकसी वो आभाचट नवीस के जाहर करने सो सरकार में मालुम भया इस वास्ते सरकार को आपका बुलवाना मंजूर हैं। आपका आवना उहां सों विना परवानगी नवाब आसबदोला बहादेर के नहीं हो सकता इस वास्ते बलीता नवाब साहेब के नामलेके आभाचट नवीस जाते हैं आपको रूकसत कराये के साथ अपने लावेंगे आपके षरच का वा सिरिस्ता मुलाकात का वमुजम नवाब साहेब के हमकु मंजूर है इस वास्ते चिठी मोहोंरी वतोर संनघ के आपके नाम की जाती है सो आप कृपा करके आइयेगा तपसी षरच को वाद हजामुला कौल का वई तपसील सरका मंजूर हैं आपके लिवावने के वास्ते मय सवारी सरकार के सत्रस्तक जायेंगे सीवाइ इसके बैठक आपकी दरवार में आधी-गदी पर होयगा ओर षरच का बंदोवस्त आज की तारीख सों पांच ५००० हजार रूपैया का दरमाहा आपको हमेसा सरकार सों मुकरर भया सो आपको मिला जायगा जादा शुभ-

मिति चैत्र सुदी ५ संवत् १८४५

## APPENDIX A

*Seal of Scindia Bahadur Madhav Rao*

Hail prosperous, the most exalted, repository of all virtues, learned in the Vedas and the Shastras, honoured by the State, the Splendour of the kingdom, Sri Pandit Gangadhar; may you accept the obeisances of exalted Maharaj Madhav Rao Scindia. All is well here. Further, detailed news about you have been known to us through Bhau Bakhshi and Aba Chitnavis. For this reason His Highness is agreeable to calling you here. You cannot come here from that place without a permit from Nawab Asaf-ud-daulah Bahadur. Consequently, a *kharita* has been sent to the Nawab through Aba Chitnavis. He will bring you here after obtaining necessary permission. We are agreeable to bear all your expenses as per letter of the Nawab Sahib. We are, therefore, sending a letter to you bearing our seal in this connection. So please come here. Details of expenses for the interview are acceptable to His Highness' Government. His Highness with his retinue will travel one Kos to receive you. Besides, you will be given a seat near the throne. From this

date you will be paid Rs. 5,000 monthly for your expenses. You will always secure this sum as agreed upon by my government. The rest is alright. Miti Chait Sudi 5, Samvat 1845.

Miti Chait Sudi 5, Samvat 1845

Sd. Raja Scindia Bahadur Madhav Rao Singh.

(Translation same as in proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission 23rd Session, p. 61.).

## APPENDIX B

*Copy of a Sanad granted to Pt. Gangadhar Shastri by Daulat Rao of Gwalior for villages in Eglas Taluq in Aligarh in Samrat 1853.*

श्री महाराजाधिराज श्री महाराज आलीजाद सुवेदारजी श्री दौलत रावजी सिंह बहादुर के सिरकार स सनद करि दई तालुके इगलास परगने हवेली सिरकार को ससुवे अकबरावाद के आमिलान हाल ईस्तकवाल को मालुम होयं आगू वेद शास्त्र समपन्न वेद मूर्तिराज श्री गंगाधर पंडित पुत्र मिश्र देवनारायण कु शाकद दीपी ब्राम्हण ईन्हों हजूर से जाहर करिकै सुभंचितक पूजा वा सेवा भजन सुमरन दौलतबाही में अभिष्टा चिंतन करै है और षरब ब्राम्हनों विद्यारथी वा आदमी आये गये का अवेक राखै है उमेदवार है के तालुके मजकुर उदक पुन्यार्थ नाम सुभंचितक के मुकर हौ और परवाना सिरकार का नाम आमिली-हाल वा ईस्तकवाल के करि पाउ जो सवाल दसषती जगन्नाथ राव बहादुर का दफतर में पोंहचा ओर मुसाइले थोर वसत पात्र है जालीयें लिखाजाहै के तालुका मजकुर सिवाय घरनी मिलक व बानात कदीम सायर सहित कुल पाव ओर कुल कानून पटी वा पटी हाल ओर तीसरा हिंसा सिरकार का जल त्रनि काष्ठ पाषान निधीनिक क्षेत्रधा सब वावतों समेत पुत्र पौत्र को नाम पंडितजी को छोड़ देनां और कोई तरै भेट वैगार वे सकल सर देहीन जरातों वगैरै सो मुजाहम न होना कै वहां की आमदनी कु पंडितजी अपने ब्राह्मनों के षर्चें में लाये के सिरकार कु आशीरवाद देत रहै या बात में ताकीद जान के लिये क अमल में लावना

१ अगलास मौजे

१ मौजे अंसावर

१ मौजे करथला

१ मौजे गिदीली

१ मौजे भीलपुर

१ मौजे सीता पुर

१ मौजे लालपुर

सद्रहुतालकै अगलास परगने हवेली सिरकार को सिवाय घरनी मिलक वा बानात कदीम उदक पुन्यार्थ नाम पंडित जी के हजूर से करार करि दीना सो जलावना जो वे पावते रहै सायर दषल देना मिति आषाढ़ वदी ११ समत १८५३

*English version of Appendix 'B'*

Shri Maharajdhiraj Alijah Subedarji Shri Daulat Raoji Sindhia Bahadur does hereby grant this *Sanad* to the great scholar Shri Gangadhar Mishra son of Devanarain Mishra of village in Eglas Taluq, Pargana Haveli, Suba Akbarabad. Let it be known hereby to all the officers employed now or in future that the said Pandit has offered pujas and benedictions for the welfare of His Highness who has been pleased to grant him these villages so that he may meet the expenses of the Brahmins, students and guests coming to him. These villages are granted to him with all their rights including those that accrue from water, grass, forest and stone-querries, and free from *Begar*, *Peshkash*, *Nazarana*, etc., so that while enjoying the profits of these villages he may offer blessings for the welfare of His Highness. All the officers are directed to act according to this written order.

List of villages:

1. Village Eglas.
2. Village Bhilpur.
3. Village Asahar.
4. Village Sitapur.
5. Village Karthala.
6. Village Gidauli (Gandauli).
7. Village Lalpur.

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## APPENDIX C

*Copy of a Sanad of village Kahada under Sahjahawnabad granted to Pandit Gangadhar Sastri of village Kanhari in gaya District by Daulat Rau Sindhia in Samvat 1861.*

श्री महाराजाधिराज राजराजेश्वर महाराज सूबेदार जी श्री जसवंत रावजी होलकर आलीजाह बहादुर के सरकार से सनद कर दी परगने निगोर सरकार सहारनपुर सूबे साहजहानवाद के आमिलान हाल इसतकवाल के कु मालुम होई मौजे कहडा परगना मजकुर को बमूजब परवाने राजे श्री दौलत राव सीधे वेदमूरत राजे श्री गंगाधर पंडित बाबत फते लड़ाई उहेलो के मुकरर है सो उलमूजब लीषा जाता

जो गांव मजकूर सीवाइ हमलाक बागात मूसारण अलहकू छोड़ दी ज्यों जो मुसारन अलह गांव मजदूर कू वार कि आसीरवाद देते रहे और किसी बात से सात इलत भेट वेगार वेस नजरांने वगेरे से मुजाहमत न करनी और हर साल सनद नइ न मांगनी इस बात में विशेष ताकीद जान लीबे माफक अमल में लावना

मीती कातिक बदी ७ संमत १८६१

## APPENDIX D

*Copy of document of mauzajhudavai granted to Pt. Gangadhar Sastri by Maharaja Madho Rao Sindhia in Samvat 1861.*

श्री महाराजाधीराज राजराजेश्वर महाराज सूबेदार जी श्री जसवंत राव जी होलकर आलीजाह बहादुर के सरकार से सनद कर दीआ मोलान हाल वा इस्तकवाल परगने अच्छेरे सूबे अकबरावाद के कुमाल महोद वो झुझवई परगने मजकूर को वमूजव परवाने राजे श्री माधो राव सींधी पै बहादुर वेद मूरतराजे श्री गंगाधर पंडीत बीन देवनारायन बीरामहन सांकलदीपी के नाव मुकरर रहे सो उस मूजवलीया जाइ हे जो गांव मजकूनगरा सुधां छोड़ देना जो मुसारन अलह गांव मजकूर कू पाइके आसीरवाद देत रहे ओर किसी बात से सातइलत भेट वेगार नजरांन पसक सब गेरे मुजाहमत तकरनी ओर हर साल सनद नइ न मागनी इस बात से वीशेश ताकीद जान लीबे माफक अमल में लावनां

मीती कातिक बदी ९ संमत १८६१

## APPENDIX 'E'

To

The Hon'ble

N. B. Edmonstone Esqr.,

Vice-President in Council,

Fort William.

Hon'ble Secretary,

Rev. Dept.

We do ourselves the honour to submit for the consideration of Government copies of a correspondence with the Collector of Allygurrh relative to seven villages under the denomination of Talooka Eglas hitherto held free of rent by the late Gungadhar Pundit together with a Translate of the sannud produced by his heirs and which from the attestation of Mr. Cunyngham bearing date the 9th January, 1804, appears to have been produced by the Grantee at the first introduction of the British Government into these provinces.

This grant has already been noticed in our address of the 16th September, 1814, in regard to other lands similarly held by the deceased in the district of Agra and as this grant is similarly conditional for the education of pupils and the distribution of alms exclusive of the maintenance of the grantee himself we beg leave to suggest that three-fourths of the produce of the lands be similarly appropriated under the superintendence of the Magistrates and Collector to the public benefits contemplated by it. The produce of the lands is estimated at Rs. 10,356.

Board of Commissioners

Furrokaabad,

The \*30th Oct., 1815.

I have etc. etc.  
(Sd.) E. Colebrooke,  
Board of Commissioners,  
the 6th February, 1816.  
True copy  
(Sd.) M. Moore,  
Secretary.

#### APPENDIX 'F'

To

The Local Agents,

At Allygurh.

Gentleman,

The Right Hon'ble the Governor General in Council having been pleased under date 5th ultimo to authorize the appropriation of a portion of the produce from the lands formerly held by the late Gungadhar Pundit amounting to Rs. 7,768 (or 7,767) to public and charitable purposes I am directed by the Board of Commissioners to desire that you will superintend the administration of the concern.

For your further information a copy of the Board's address to the Government with an extract from a letter from the acting Secretary to Government in reply is herewith forwarded.

Board of Commissioners,

Furrokaabad, the 6th Feb., 1816.

I have, etc. etc.

(Sd.) M. Moore.

Secretary.

\* 13 October 1815 *vide* Home Dept. (Education Branch August 1882 No. 43.



## APPENDIX G

*Extract of a letter from the Acting Secretary to Government in Finance Department dated 5th January 1816.*

## Para 2.

As the sunnud under which the lands in the district of Allygurh were holden by the late Gangadhar Pundit appears to be authentic and to have been produced by the Grantee on the first introduction of the British Government into that district the Governor General in Council is pleased to authorize the appropriation of the produce of the lands in question which is estimated at Rs. 10,356 as suggested by you.

3. Under this arrangement one-fourth will be appropriated for the heirs of Gungadhar Pundit.....2589.....and three-fourths to public and charitable purposes.....7767.....

4. It is considered to be preferable to commit the administration of this concern to the Collector and Registrar of the district of Allygurh in the capacity of Local Agents instead of associating the Magistrate with the Collector for this purpose as proposed by you. You will therefore be pleased to issue the necessary instructions to the local Agents.

Board of Commissioners;

The 6th February, 1816.

True extract.

(Sd.) M. Moore.

Secretary.

## APPENDIX 'H'

To

C. Macsween Esqr.,  
Commissioner of Revenue  
for the Division of Agra

Sir,

I have the honour to forward my proceedings on the claim of the heirs of Gungadhar Pundit deceased, to the amount in deposit from the receipts of Talooqa Englas from the period of attachment by the Collector to the date in which the orders of Government authorizing the appropriation of the produce was enforced.

The heirs of the deceased Pundit presented their petition to the Board of Revenue who on the 23rd February 1816 and 5th September 1817, called on the Collector to report, by some oversight the report was never furnished. The heirs of Gungadhar have frequently importuned me and when forming the Settlement of Talooqa Eglas the year before last under the provisions of Regulations 7 of 1882 I promised to report their claim to the Commissioner; pressure of business has delayed it till now.

On the introduction of the British Government Talooqa Eglas was held rent free by Gungadhar Pundit: in Ughum 1221F Gungadhar died\* in consequence of disputes amongst the sons of the Pundit the collector on the 3rd October 1814 corresponding with 4 Koar 1222 F attached the estates reporting the circumstances to the Board on the 25th March, 1815; on the 5th January 1816 the Government authorized the produce of the Talooqa to be appropriated as follows:

One-fourth to the heirs of Gungadhar Pandit, three-fourths to charitable and public purposes. These orders were transmitted by the Board on the 6th February 1816 and enforced as appears by the Robakaree of the Collector on the 28th February 1816 corresponding with 16 Fagoon 1223 F.

The enquiries instituted by the Collector to learn what disbursement has been made by the heirs of the Pundit between the period of their father's death and the orders of Government for resuming  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the produce of the estate afterwards appropriated to the use of the college at Agra and the following is the sums expended.

															Total
						On acct. of a seminary for teaching Bede (Veda) Shastrer				On acct. of  Charity					
1221	.	.	.	.	.	6,496	9	3		4,994	5	0	11,490	14	3
1222	.	.	.	.	.	6,567	15	0		5,839	12	9	12,427	11	9
1223	.	.	.	.	.	7,198	0	3		6,200	9	9	13,398	10	0
1224	.	.	.	.	.	4,418	9	9		4,439	2	6	8,857	11	3

As it may appear inconsistent that so long a sum was yearly expended whilst the collection of Talooqa Eglas never exceeded much more than 10,000 rupees it is necessary here to mention that in addition to Talooqa Eglas Mauzahs Chaundaree and Chamma Zillah

(2) Died in December 1813. Home Dept (Education) Proceedings, August 1882, No. 43.

Agra were held by the heirs of the Pundit to meet the above expenditure.

Allyghur Collectorship

The 14th August, 1831

(Sd.) M. N. Tylar,

Acting Collector.

Dr. K.K. Datta is professor and Head of the Department of History, Patna College and an Associate member of the Commission on behalf of the Government of Bihar. He is the Convener of the Bihar Regional Records Survey Committee set up by the Indian Historical Records Commission. He has several historical works of outstanding merit to his credit all based on the study of original documents.

## A FRESH 'PATIA' OF THE TIME OF THE LAST CHAUHAN RULER OF SAMBALPUR—ATHARAGARH.

[By L. P. Pandeya.]

For the Trivandrum session of the I. H.R.C. an article entitled "Two palm leaf Pattas of the time of the last Chauhan Ruler of Sambalpur Atharagarh" was contributed by me. It appears in the Proceedings of the Meetings Vol. XIX pp 111-114, December 1942.

Quite recently I have come across a fresh *Patta* written in *Hindi* language and *Devanagari* script from the Sarsiwani Tract, formerly in the Bilaspur District and now in the Raipur District of Madhya Pradesh.

The Sarsiwani tract is a Hindi speaking tract and formerly consisted of a group of about 42 villages called "Sarsiwani Biya lisi". This tract used to be administered by the Chauhan Maharajas of Sambalpur, who were lords of 18 garhs under the Sambalpur Raj. The Sambalpur Raj was at that time a *bi-lingual* administrative unit as it were.

To the N.W. of it, lay the Chandrapur Taluq consisting of about 175 villages and the Sarsiwani tract referred to above, where people spoke *Laria* (Hindi) as distinguished from 'Oriya' which was, and still is the common language of entire Sambalpur Raj. *Laria* is another name for "Chhatisgarhi" the spoken language of Chhatisgarh (meaning a land of 36 forts of which it comprised in olden days.)

According to the late Dr. Sir G.A. Grierson's "Linguistic Survey of India" Chhatisgarhi or Lariya is a dialect of Eastern Hindi.

The present Hindi *Patta* was meant for a village 'Amalidih' lying in the Sarsiwani tract adjoining the present Sarangarh Sub-Division of Raigarh district. The Hindi *Patta* is a proof of the fact that the language of the people was duly respected and recognised by the liberal and wise policy of the Chauhan Rulers of the time. It is also an example of administrative expediency. The *Patta* is written in Hindi on a thin yellow coloured piece of paper. The top portion contains the royal emblem चक्र (discus). It is in 16 lines and is duly dated in Vikram Samvat 1893=1837 A.D. The signature of the Ruler is in *Oriya* script at the end of the document.

The village of 'Amalidiah, was leased for two years, i. e. 1894 and 1895 Vikram. For 1894 the village was granted मफ़ी (Revenue free) while for the year 1895, the revenue was fixed at Rs. 15/- in *Nagpuri* silver coins to be paid in one kist or instalment. At the expiry of the lease period, the *Patta* in original was to be returned to the Hazur (the Ruler).

The text of the *patta* is reproduced below : --

भोवनी श्री श्री महाराजधीराज श्री श्री महाराजा श्री श्री  
नरायणसीध देव के

मौजा अमलीडीह जैदेवलाल गौटीआ को गौटी पत्र संमत १८९४  
साल लगाएत समत १८९५ साल समेत दो साल को दीआ गया  
तीसका सिरसता असा जो समत १८९४ साल का माफी वो  
समन १८९५ साल को नागपुरी पंद्रह १५ रुपैया एक किश्त  
मो वेवाक दाखिल करोगे वो सरकार का हुकुम बमौजीब वो मुलकी  
दसतुर बमौजिब बैठि वगेर जो कुछ के पड़ेगा सो देना करोगे  
वो आबादी वो बैरानी का उजुर नहीं रखोगे मिआद आखरी  
पर पटा हजुर मो दाखिल करोगे फकत मीती आसुन बदी ६  
संमत १८८३ साल ।

(In उड़िया script) सही

## DANGER TO JHANSI IN 1774-75

(By T. S. Shejwalkar)

The precariousness of Maratha rule in Northern India has not been properly understood by historians, to judge from their writings. It was a continuous struggle which lasted up to the end of Maratha rule. Scarcely a year passed without some trouble cropping up somewhere, necessitating a military expedition. Posts changed hands so many times that it becomes a difficult matter to give a continuous history of the whole region. This state continued even after the advent of British rule, till 1860. Jhansi, which had become the key-post for Maratha rule in Bundelkhand, stood in constant danger of being taken by the enemies. It had been lost after Panipat and retaken after four years by Malharrao Holkar. Since 1770, it was under the command of Raghunath Hari Nevalkar, who found it difficult to hold, surrounded as he was by redoubtable enemies Shuja-ud-daula of Oudh, the Ruhelas, the Jats, the Bundela Rajas, the Gujars, the Rajputs, besides agents of the Delhi Emperor, were now and then thinking of occupying this important post. Hearing of the murder of Narayanrao Peshwa, Shuja had sent one Mir Naim,<sup>1</sup> at the end of 1773, to occupy lands south of the river Jumna, but he was defeated at great cost by the Commandant of Jhansi and other Maratha Captains in the vicinity. The Vazir had defeated the Ruhelas with the help of the English battalions. thereafter and occupied lands in the Doab belonging to the Marathas. He met Mirza Najaf Khan the Commander of the forces of Shah Alam at Etawah and settled the future line of ousting the Marathas in consultation with him on 27th February, 1774. Anupgir Gosavi<sup>2</sup> rented the lands in the Doab for Rs. 51 lacs from Shuja, who ordered him to cross the Jumna if the civil war begun by Peshwa Raghoba in the Deccan continued further. He sent his assistance against the Maratha posts, Mirachgir to Jhansi and Shinggir to Gulsarai.<sup>3</sup> They invested these posts at the end of 1774. Raghunath Hari found himself in great danger, and was at his wit's end how to meet it and whence to find the money to carry on the operations. Seeing the Gosavi troops in overwhelming force, the local rebels raised their heads and stopped payment of revenues to the Marathas. They began to occupy one post after another and loot the region. Besides Jhansi, Gwalior

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<sup>1</sup>PD 29-281.

<sup>2</sup>PD 29-280.

<sup>3</sup>PD 29-279.

and Kalpi were the two other Maratha posts in similar danger, but the Gosavis were particularly against Jhansi, as they had been driven away from it after it had remained in their charge for a number of years. The Gosavi troops<sup>1</sup> are reported to have been some 15,000, while Raghunath Hari had 2,500 horse and 3,000 infantry with which to defend not only the fort, but the surrounding region on which it depended for provisions and succour. We have found out a copy of a letter written to Raghunath Hari by Tryambakrao Apaji Shrikhande on 12th November 1774 before the siege started. This Tryambakrao appears to be an unnoticed notable of the period. Possibly he was a relation of the Nevalkar family of Parola in East Khandesh and was a Kamavisdar of the Holkars of Indore.<sup>2</sup> His place of residence was the important fortalice of Thalner on the north bank of the river Tapti in west Khandesh. A vigorous Marathi writer with good Sanskrit education, his letter shows particular loyalty and friendship for the Nevalkar family in general and Raghunath Hari of Jhansi in particular. Raghunath Hari had sent letters to all Maratha Sardars as well as to the Central Government at Poona then conducted by Sakharam Bapu and Nana Fadnis. The Central Government found it difficult to defend its precarious position against Raghoba, who was sojourning in Central India and carrying on talks with Mahadji Shinde and Tukoji Holkar that they might join him in his adventure of becoming the Peshwa. Naturally the Centre could do nothing for outlying posts like Jhansi at this juncture. Raghunath Hari therefore asked for support from local captains in Central India and he found a staunch supporter in this Tryambakrao Apaji who writes from Kanar near Shajapur as follows<sup>3</sup>:—

“Your letter of 21 Saban received on 2 Ramzan and the contents noted. Your letter was received after the army had taken possession of Ujjain and begun its march forward. I was personally however still at Ujjain for some talks at the Darbar. Your anxiety as expressed in your letter is appropriate enough. What you had written on account of delay from this side was perfectly true. But we had already been caught in the mesh and therefore could not act according to your hint. We have begun the march of the army and God willing shall reach Sironj till Kartik Vadya 2, with 2000 troops. I am writing this at a distance of 20 Kos from Ujjain. Just as you have defended your side up to now, you should continue to do it for some two or three weeks more, (till we reach the destination). Bhausahab, you have exhibited the greatest courage up till now and

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<sup>1</sup>PD 29-282.

<sup>2</sup>Rayarikar Collection (Manuscript).

<sup>3</sup>Navalkar Collection (Manuscript).

should not lose courage for a further short time. God has brought the matters to a pass when the enemy will surely be defeated. Shrimant Tukoji Holkar has arrived at Indore. He has met Shrimant Patil Bawa (Mahadji Shinde) at our request. Tukoji's nephew Bapu Holkar and Mahadji's relation Bahirji Takpir, with 5000 horse and 10,000 Pendharies, have started. Provision for 8,000 more Pendhari troops has also been made on oath. Express despatches have been sent to Bahirji on Kartik Shuddha 5. I have given full information of the state of affairs in Bundelkhand about the Jatila (i.e. Gosavi) invasion to Patil Bawa and convinced him about the danger. I have started as a vanguard with 2000 horse with full authority for the conduct of the campaign in my name. How hard I have worked to get the force started, God only knows. I have accepted the burden for draft worth Rs. 50,000 on my own responsibility to be paid at Sironj and will be relieved of this burden either by you or God. What I have done with full heart in the matter can be understood by you only. The troops are of the best quality with good arms and ammunition. Jagannathrao Mane, brother of Ghanashyam Mane (is in charge of these troops). I have not acted merely as a Vakil on your part in this affair, but have stood as Raghunathrao himself, taking the whole burden on myself, when the nation (the people) has raised its head and begun to move. You know that Patil Bawa has no particular care for this side and therefore it should be clear how much he can do for us! All these affairs cannot be put down in writing. I have started correspondence with the Chief of Gohad from this place and have spared no effort for attaining your end. Only God can now crown our efforts with success. You should not lose courage, depending on the news from the Gosavi. Understand that I am reaching your place in a short time. If you came to Sironj with the necessary funds so far so good, otherwise you should send some responsible man of full confidence with the necessary money. If your coming to Sironj is likely to derange matters there and loosen your authority, you should not come if you care. But the provision of money, if made without loss of time, will bear instantaneous fruit. The troops are pestering me here and not you. Knowing this, you should relieve me from this quandary and save me from any untoward happening at the hands of the troops. Knowing that you are in imminent danger, and the empire has entered in troublous times, I have offered myself as a victim to this cause, because without such a step no other remedy was open to us. If we turn our face at such a juncture, then when can we be of any use to men like you? I have become a partner in your difficulty. God only can reward me in the end. As I am your well-wisher, further writing about this is superfluous. For the last three weeks I have fallen in this pit. Henceforward we should act according to the circumstances and what we think needful.



Even if you send the money, it is not certain that the posts occupied by the enemy will at once fall into our hands. But some 40-50 families of the Marathas are living as if imprisoned in them. We should send them to Sironj, and looting the enemy territory, bring him down. Thinking like this, I have offered money according to the wishes of the Sardars (Shinde and Holkar). Writing to Trimbakrao (Odhekar) I have called the horsemen and he has made the army start on its journey after great exertions. But no body knows what will happen to this post before your money is received in Sironj and the army reaches this place. Sonari lies some five/six Kos from this place. Bhaskar Jagannath Dhavadshikar was in charge of that post. It was invested by the army from Datia. I sent my horsemen who drove away that investing army. We have killed some fifty soldiers there, amongst which one notable Thakur, a near relation of the Chief of Datia, was one, whereupon the Raja of Datia himself came with an army of 4000 together with cannon and attacked the post. But the men inside the fortress were select and Bhaskar Jagannath is also a valiant man. They repulsed the attack in which some 100-150 men of the enemy lost their lives. Dhavadshikar also lost some fifteen men. By the enemy's bombardment, the fortress is damaged and it was not proof against the enemy's attack. We could not support him because we are a very small party. As the Raja was intent on taking the fort there was little possibility of the said Dhavadshikar escaping with his life from that place. But God has saved him, as the Raja took fright of our coming and bolted from the place. Really speaking we had little strength. But when the captains in charge of the fortress opened talks with the surrounding force, one on the enemy's side allowed Dhavadshikar to get out safely with his men for some consideration. A great disaster has been averted. Up till now we have not lost in the skirmishes that have taken place, but as there is no money for daily expenses, the men in the army have become most depressed. Balajipant Baba (Kher Bundele) was also suffering from the same difficulty. As we could not pay, our army lost all hope. For the last four months we are pulling on in this condition. In the meanwhile the enemy is proceeding leisurely from one post to another. As soon as the provisions were exhausted, the post had to be vacated. In this manner we have vacated five posts, after holding out according to our strength for some time. Now the fort (?) has been surrounded by the enemy. If within a fortnight or a month at most succour does not reach from the Sardars, the future is dark. Who can tell what will happen next if the fort is lost. I have been placed between two mill-stones. What you have written is true enough. But under the present circumstances returning to the Deccan will not improve matters. Very likely we will find ourselves in worse condition (in the Civil War between Raghoba and

the Barbhais). So I have decided to continue in our present condition and I am prepared for the worst that may happen here. Blessings to you."

We have thought it necessary to translate the whole letter because it gives an inside view of the matters going on then. Jhansi was not still completely invested and the whole danger from Oudh suddenly disappeared in a moment in January 1775, with the death of Shuja-ud-Daula. Not that the Gosavi troops scattered in Bundelkhand were withdrawn or defeated at once, but the main source of machinations against the Marathas in the Darbar of the Vazir in Lucknow ceased to exist on account of the internal difference of opinion. The English were not in a position to take advantage of the situation by planning a forward policy. They had no interest in the expansion or resuscitation of the Mughal power. It appears from some unrelated letters quoted by Parasnis<sup>1</sup> in his Bundelkhand Chapter that Shinggir (or Singargir?) was finally defeated at Gulsarai by Dinkar Baburao Kher, a nephew of Govindpant Bundel of Panipat fame, in September 1775. The promised help from Shinde and Holkar, however, did not reach Sironj (as referred to in the letter) till the beginning of the year 1776, i.e., one full year later. That was how Maratha affairs were going on then.<sup>2</sup> The Gosavi brothers Anupgir and Umraogir lost favour under the successor of Shuja, and they themselves found their position untenable. The English resident at the Court of Lucknow was ordered from Calcutta not to allow the young Nawab to cross the Jumna against the Marathas, as peace proposals were being discussed between the English and the Marathas in the Deccan. The Maratha troops reoccupied Kalpi in 1776 by dispersing the Gosavi troops after many skirmishes. Many Gosavi troops took service under Mahadji Shinde and finally Anupgir himself took service under him. This shows the principleless scramble for power and anarchy obtaining throughout India in the last quarter of the 18th century.

<sup>1</sup>*Marathyanche Parakrama* (Bundelkhand Chapter), p. 178.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 181.

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## OUDH AND THE QUESTION OF SALT TAX IN 1867

(By Nandalal Chatterji)

Among the old records preserved in the Deputy Commissioner's Court, Lucknow, there is a bundle of papers relating to an official controversy on the question of salt tax. The matter under discussion is: 1. whether the existing rate of Rs. 3 per maund was unduly high, and, 2. whether internal manufacture could be permitted. According to the Oudh Superintendent of Stamps and Excise, 1. the rate was excessive, and 2. internal manufacture was desirable. (*Vide* E.N.C. Braddon's "Report Upon The Oudh Salt Question", July, 15, 1867).

The grounds given by the Superintendent in support of his contention may be thus summarised:—

1. The salt sources of Oudh and the N. W. Provinces are practically limitless in number. The richest tracts are comparatively few, but in some districts there is scarcely a single village in which good salt can not be made. "God has granted these saline wells or mines to Oudh, and no man now will advocate the closing of them".

2. On natural equity argument the people should be permitted "to enjoy the gifts with which it has pleased Providence to enrich the lands they live on".

3. Existing restrictions encourage smuggling and illicit manufacture. Kumaon and other hill tracts are supplied by salt smuggled by the Bhutias from Tibet and China "in exchange for rice getting and equal measure of salt" (*Vide* Diary of the Commissioner of Customs, 22nd September 1866).

4. The rate of tax prevents the people from obtaining as much edible salt as is necessary for them and their cattle.

These arguments, ultra-modern as they sound, are controverted in detail by the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner of Customs in their respective reports. (*Vide* Reports, dated 4th September 1867).

That internal manufacture would not ease the situation is thus shown by the critics:—

1. The present customs line would have to be maintained to prevent the western salts from getting in untaxed.

2. Internal manufacture would "drive our taxed manufacture out of the market and deprive us of our whole revenue".
3. An enormous and costly establishment is required to permit local manufacture and secure the tax on the produce.
4. "The natural equity argument is unsound".
5. Internal manufacture would not stop or discourage smuggling.

That the rate of tax (Rs. 3 per maund) was not high is thus demonstrated:—

1. A full year's supply costs no more than seven annas per head. The average income of the poorest man does not "fall short of Rs. 36 per annum; on this income then the total cost of the salt supply is only 1·2 per cent; such a price is not prohibitive".
2. Good edible salt can scarcely be sold for less than Rs. 4 a maund, or 5 annas for three seers.
3. "The total annual cost of the poorest man's food is not less than 18 Rs. per annum; is it reasonable to talk of people being deprived of salt, because its cost amounts to 1·40ths of the total cost of their food?"
4. The incidence of the tax is "infinitesimal", and even in the case of the poorest classes it amounts to "considerably less than 1 per cent on their earnings".
5. Facts and figures do not support the view that the salt laws are detrimental to the health of people and cattle. The Commissioner states, "I have never yet met the native who could afford to purchase a meal could yet not afford to procure as much salt as was necessary to season it".

The Commissioner clinches his argument with this sarcastic question, "What has Oudh done that her residents should pay less duty than the rest of Upper India? Why should Oudh be thus favoured, and how can the Government afford to relinquish 2·3rds of the tax now levied on Oudh-consumed salt?"

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Before being appointed as Reader of Modern Indian History at Lucknow University, Dr. N. L. Chatterjee has been serving the University as a lecturer in History. He is an Associate Member of the Indian Historical Records Commission and has to his credit several historical works of outstanding merit, the most important being *Mir Kasim and Verelst's Rule in India*.

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# NOTE ON SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF WILLIAM SMYTH (1658-1664)

(By S. Natarajan)

The Hyderabad State Library contains a very interesting collection of fourteen unpublished letters some original and some copies of William Smyth, a factor at Viravasaram<sup>1</sup> (Verasheroone). One of these dated 14th September 1663 was addressed to his brother Edward Smith, Bridge House, Tooley's Street, Madras Merchant, South York and the rest were written to his father John Smith of North Nibley in the country of Gloucester. The most important of these letters are those dated 24th December 1658, 29th December 1659, 12th January 1660, 30th December 1661 and 2nd June 1663 which were written from Viravasaram, and those dated 13th September 1663 and 19th January 1663/4 written from Madapollam and Fort St. George respectively. These letters have been preserved well being neatly bound in one volume bearing the title "The East India Company, Sec. XVIII Mss letters from India, the Circars and Madras 1658-1664." The accession number in the State Library is H.4, 1556. Almost all letters have seals—probably that of the factory—in perfect condition with the red tape binder under the seals.

These are written in a legible hand in the characteristic script of the Pre-Restoration period. But it is full of odd and old spelling and unconventional abbreviations which add to the difficulty in reading these letters. There is no uniformity in spelling proper names and Gloucester, for example, is spelt in half a dozen different ways. These letters cover in all 21 pages of foolscap size paper each page containing on average 50 lines consisting of about 12 words.

The first three of these letters mentioned above were in the possession of Mr. Reginald Cholmondeley, of Condover Hall in 1876, but his collection had since been dispersed. William Foster referring to these letters in his 'English Factories in India 1655-1660' regretted that the "present ownership of these interesting documents is not known" and had to be satisfied with referring to account given in the Fifth report of the Historical Mss Commission (Sessional Volume No. 40 of 1876, p. 360).<sup>2</sup> The Hyderabad State Library is the

<sup>1</sup> I am deeply indebted to Mr. K. Sajjanlal, M.A., for giving the information about the whereabouts of these letters.

<sup>2</sup> The English Factories in India 1655-1660 by William Foster p. 2361.

proud owner of not only the three letters referred to above but 11 more ranging over a period of nearly 6 years. It is not possible at present to state how and when they were acquired by the library.

William Symth was appointed as one of the merchants on 25 1 at Viravasaram, a small inland town nearly 40 miles from Masulipatam. He seems to have been an industrious and earnest worker and was given a good character by the Company. In his letter to his father dated 24th December 1658 he wrote that "Mr. A Count our chief Mr. Seymour our second dae very well agree which is the life of our trade".

In his letter dated 12th January 1660 he wrote that "in the month of June last Mr. Roger Seymour second of Verasheroone was unfortunately drowned seeking to passe a river on horse back, by which means I am advanced to the secondshipp of that factorie". There is a reference to this drowning tragedy in a letter from Madras to the Court dated 11th January 1661.<sup>1</sup> This difference in the dates has been responsible for some confusion. It has been suggested by the Historical Mss Commission that Smyth's letter was written a year before the Madras letter to the Court. But this discrepancy in dates is due to the fact that while Smyth's letters are dated according to the Old Style the other is dated according to the New Style introduced by Pope Gregory XIII. This view is confirmed by the fact that Smyth's letter from Fort St. George is dated 19th January 1663/4. In other words the year of the letter would be 1663 according to the Old Sytem and 1664 according to the New. It is only on this assumption that we can synchronise the dates of the other incidents referred to in the letters with the dates of those events gathered from other sources.

Soon after this, in September 1661, Daniel the Chief Factor died and from now for nearly 2 years he was in "the sole management of this factory and have my selfe alone without any assistance gone through and compleated the Companys Investment of a considerable some". But he got into trouble by reason of a difference he had with Mr. Roger Kilvert and was subjected to "Greate deale of Injustice". This was not his only misfortune. In his letter dated June 2, 1663 he informed his father that he got into trouble for seizing "in the name and for the use of the Hon. Co. goods belonging to Mr. William Jearsay then an interloper or private person now Chiefe for the Hon. Co. in Metchlepatam under which this factory of Verashroone is subordinate". This created feelings of deep hatred and malice in the Chief and Smyth was afraid that he would not "be employed in their service for the future in anything unlesse

<sup>1</sup> The English Factories in India 1655-1660 by William Foster p. 2361,

copying of a letter or some such means employment". When a complaint was made to the President at Surat and his Agent, he was informed that the case would be heard in full Committee at home. But he was afraid that the company would be more influenced by Clandestine information than by real reports of the incidents and so he requested his father to use his influence to secure the good offices of some influential men in England on his behalf.

From August 16, 1663 when his contract was at an end he left the Company's service "not for any self interest or dislike of employment" but "because of the difference betwixt the now Chiefe Mr. Wm Jearsey and selfe which hath not only extended to words but blowes in soe much that I have received sufficient affronts which must lye buried in obliviou until wee meete in place where both parties may appeale and not as here where heeis as well judge as partie".<sup>1</sup>

In his subsequent letter from Fort St. George dated January 19, 1663/4 he wrote to his father that "by the desire of the senior Edward Winter our agent againe entertheyned my selfe in the Co. service but with this proviso not to enter into bonds until I heare from my friends out of England neither doe I againe intende to oblige my selfe unlesse my imployment be answerable to my time and experience in these parts soe that till then I am bounde or free at my pleasure".

The expiry of the Company's character and the prospects of "new election espetially if his Majestic doe againe confirme their charter of which some here doubt"<sup>2</sup> roused his ambition and he wrote to his brother "If I have friends in the committee and any new election should bee I may bee in the hopes of getting some perfirmment my standing and insight being as old and greate as most". Unfortunately we have no information if his expectations were realised or were only frustrated hopes.

These letters contain some interesting details regarding the conditions then prevailing at Viravasaram "I find the Contrie to agréee with mee very well. It bein att present not much hotter than with you in the midst of summer, but wee are in auttum and therefore mast expect it hotter.....I am placed in the healthiest place in all India or the coast of Cormondell. It is an Innland towns some 40=*English miles from the Metripolitan port and factory which is*

<sup>1</sup>Smyth's letter to his brother from Madapollam, dated September 14, 1663.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Smyth to his brother from Fort St. George, dated January 19, 1663/4.

called Metechlupatam this countrie is Levell for 100=miles or more nott one hill to be seene but as plain as our downes in England; we have such an abundance of wild foule the cheepest of our diet all the yeare Longe Is wild .....<sup>(1)</sup> and such like <sup>(2)</sup>.....Had I a good cloth coate with a large silver lace which is all the weare here and the badge of an Englishman and on the contrary without it and others answerable to it not esteemed nor regarded. Likewise the cheefest thing needeful Is good hatt.....This country is a very cheape place of residence, weare it not for the state and multiplictie of servants we strangers are constrained to keepe; all men being respected according to his traine and habbit. We have at present belonging to our factory near 70 persons, to whom wee covenant to pay betwixt 4=& 5d ster per moys each, they finding themselves all provisions and necessaries, these covenant servants are allowed when they travel or are sent abroad on our business 2d per diem which is the rate wee give to all day laborers and porters which we usually imploy to carry burdens 50:60 or 100 miles outright which is the usual conveyance we make use of for all sorts of goods we sende from place to place, all sorts of provisions are extreame cheape the usual rates of beasts is from 5 to 8d.....but of those we seldom can procure not so much for want of plentie as for that these ignorant people fancie that when they die their souls go into the belies of Oxen Cows calves and the Like on according to the estate they leave behind them. If rich then their souls goe into the bellies of oxen and soe their soulds desende and assende as their estates ebbs and flowes; yet they will not strike to monke these their Gods even unto death but will not be branded with selling their Gods unlesse nessesitie Inforseth, on these cattle they carry bundles as we doe on horses In England and the midle sort of people ride thereon these beasts have a hole bored through their nose wherein a string or small cord is passed whereby they guide them at their pleasure—they will go a hagling pace as fast as our ordinary horses trot and continue it a day 2 or three; for gotes and sheepe we have in great plentie from 6 to 10 pence per peace hens 2=pence and all other things per proportionable". A statement of the Masulipatam factors dated 13th October 1659 states that "we have at present soe great a famine in these parts, the people dying dayly for want of food, that we cannot have goods brought in as we expected"<sup>(3)</sup> It is surprising that while Masulipatam was suffering from starvation things were so plentiful and cheap at Viravasaram which was only 40 miles from Masulipatam. It only shows that transport and other facilities were completely lacking and things could not be conveyed from places of plenty to relieve the miseries of the people of the famine stricken areas.

<sup>1</sup>The word is not legible in the Mss.

<sup>2</sup>Symth's letter dated 24th December 1658.

<sup>3</sup>The English Factories in India 1655-1660 p. 263.



In a subsequent letter he complains that "I finde not India to Answer to mine & other mens expectations, who supposed that if a man get but once to India and have but his health.....there was noe feare of presently getting an estate, as though here houses were filled with diamonds and streetes paved with rubies and that shovels were a comodities to showell up golds which lay as dust which I find far otherwise, for in my judgment it is as difficult a thing to get a livelihood in these country's as in any others especially if a man have but a small beginning which is my condition"<sup>1</sup>. Smyth's experience is contrary to those of many other persons whose numerous private letters give very interesting details on this point. Smyth's unfortunate experience was due to his rather miserable pecuniary conditions. His capital outlay was very small. His salary in the early days was only 25 l Even this was not paid in full and was "being kept so meene by the company that instead of 25 l per annum I receive but 8 l 6s 8ds and the allowance for the house see low (?) that thrice as much more will not satisfie the overplus of my parte besides other necessary expenses which dayly fall in". He was also unlucky to lose much of his merchandise in shipwrecks and other ways and many of his letters to his father contain pressing requests for monetary assistance. He could not borrow from the local people because of high interest which went up to 18 per cent.

There is also a reference to the personal quarrels and misunderstandings between the various factors. For example in his letter of January 19, 1663/4 he writes "greate discontents and heart burnings is betwixt the Agent and our Chiefe in soe much that it is almost come to an open warr. The natives and Dutch laugh at these transactions I suppose that when the Co are sensible of the dangers they susteyne by it they will not bee well satisfied, they are both moneyed men and the one ought not and the other will not stoope". Mention has already been made of the quarrels between Smyth and William Jearsay and Roger Kilvert.

We further learn that "Mortalitie hath soe domineered amongst the English in all parts of India that of those that were entertheyned 3 years agoe. I really beleeeve there are not one half of them now Liveing, and it is to be feared that If it continues and noe supplys sent out, here will scarcely bee left people to write home news of their fellow servants death"<sup>2</sup>. Some of the important persons whose death had been reported were those of his cousin Broomfield, Skipwith identified by Sir Henry yule with the second Baronet of the Prestwould branch of the Skipwiths<sup>3</sup> Roger Seymour, Daniel, his own

<sup>1</sup>Smyth's letter dated 29th December 1659.

<sup>2</sup>Smyth's letter dated December 30, 1661.

<sup>3</sup>Diary of William Hedges Vol. II, p. 346.

grand father and grand mother the Broomfields and Kendrick Edisbury<sup>1</sup> The report about heavy mortality is corroborated by other letters from different individuals. Probably because of the hot weather some of the people were attacked by a fatal fever lasting not more than 6 or 8 days.<sup>2</sup>

The spiritual welfare of the factors and the Christian residents were completely neglected and no provisions were made for the appointment of priests at Viravasram. Smyth could not even christen his new born son for want of a minister and had to plan a trip to Masulipatam for the ceremony.<sup>3</sup>

There are also frequent references to some of the ships that arrived at or sailed out of the Indian harbours, the progress of their voyage, the calamities that befell them, the causes thereof etc., in one of the letters we are told that the cause of a ship losing voyage was "the dutch gave warrs with the queene of acheene as well as with many others her neighbouring kings which they like not to dae provided they can see but a profit to be made, whereof they are generally hated."<sup>4</sup> Thus we find that these letters are of absorbing interest to the historian dealing with the history of the early settlements of the Company on the Coromandel coast.

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<sup>1</sup>There is a reference to his death in the *English Factories in India 1660-1665* p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>The *English Factories in India 1655-1660* p. 201.

<sup>3</sup>Smyth's letter dated January 19, 1663/4.

<sup>4</sup>Smyth's letter dated 24th December 1658.

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# THE RECORDER'S COURT AT MADRAS (1798-1801) AND SOME OF ITS FINDINGS.

(By C. S. Srinivasachari)

## I

The Mayor's Court was started under a Charter of 1688 engrossed only by the Company's Seal and not by the Great Seal of England; and it was thus technically a Company's Court. It was superseded in 1727 by one established under the Royal Charter of 24th September 1726, which applied to all the three Presidencies. At the same time the Charter instituted trial by jury for all criminal cases in the Sessions Court of Oyer and Terminer set up by it; and it included not only the Petty Jury of twelve for the actual trial, but also the Grand Jury of twenty-four for the preliminary finding of a "true bill", which could make presentments to the Bench on all matters affecting the administration of justice. The Bench was composed of the President and two or more of the five senior Members of the Council who, as Justices of the Peace, had to hold Quarter Sessions four times a year. This transfer of criminal jurisdiction from the Mayor's Court was only a reversion to previous practice in Madras. The Mayor and Aldermen were usually members of the Grand Jury and often made Presentments that "lacked in due respect for the authority of the Council." Attempts were made by the issue of a Book of Instructions and of forms as to the methods of proceeding in all suits and trials and by the Directors' scrutiny of the annual registers of the proceedings of the Courts, in order to keep them in "the straight and narrow path of English law", and to instruct them in the fundamental English principles of a fair trial. The Charter of 1753 continued the arrangements of 1726 with only some slight alterations; and it expressly exempted from the jurisdiction of the Mayor's Court all suits and actions between 'natives' only, which should be settled among themselves, unless both parties voluntarily submitted them to its determination. But 'Indian' litigation constituted a major portion of the Court's work even from the first years of its functioning. The only Court then available for civil litigation among the Indians at Madras, was the Court of Requests for trying suits of small value, established by the Charter of 1753. The Madras Council decided in 1770 to establish a Court for the adjudication of disputes according to the "customs of the natives"; but the resolution was not implemented till 1795 when the Governor-in-Council

established a special Cutcherry Court, by virtue of the powers conferred on him by the Charter Act of 1793<sup>(1)</sup>. The Regulations for the Cutcherry Court were passed by the Council on 25th October 1796. But a new Charter of Justice provided for the appointment of a Recorder, and for the constitution of the Recorder's Court; and the Cutcherry Court was closed from 31st May 1798.

Sir Thomas Strange, the first Recorder, brought with him the Charter of 20th February 1798 for "erecting a new Court of Justice in the room of the existing Jurisdictions of this Presidency."<sup>(2)</sup> The Recorder's Court began to function as from 1st November 1798 under a proclamation.

Strange had been called to the Bar in 1785 and had functioned for some time as the Chief Justice of Nova Scotia. He was knighted on his appointment as Recorder at Madras.

## II

The Court of the Recorder for the Madras Presidency superseded the Mayor's Court, and took over its records as well as all the causes pending at the time in that Court, and proceeded to their final adjudication. The new Court also took over the judicial powers till then vested in the Governor-in-Council, whether as a Criminal Court, or as exercising an appellate jurisdiction from the Mayor's Court, and transferred to itself their records. Thus the appeals pending before the Governor-in-Council devolved upon the Court of the Recorder.

All the Advocates and Attorneys and Proctors practising in it had practised in the Mayor's Court and held the Company's license; and the changes in the *personnel* of the officers of the Court were few. The Court accepted for its jurisdictional limits the territorial limits of Madras as recently fixed by Government. The papers of the Cutcherry Court were deposited by the Government with the Recorder, the Government returning to such suitors, as had causes pending in it at the time, the fees they had been obliged to advance

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<sup>1</sup>The Governor thus minuted on the necessity for such a Court:—"At this moment in a Commercial Capital and under a British Government, where either of the Parties is indisposed to justice, the creditor has no legal means of recovering his debt or the heir his Inheritance. (Lord Hobart's minute proposing the establishment of a Court of Adulet for the decision of Civil Causes between native and native.)"

<sup>2</sup>The British Legislature being finally of opinion that an approximation to the Supreme Court at Bengal was desirable for the other two Settlements, the Act of the 37th of the King, Ch. 142, was passed; and shortly after, His Majesty was pleased, by virtue and in the pursuance of the powers it conferred, to grant a new Charter in February 1798.

for the purpose of carrying them on, and leaving it to them to renew them as they might be advised, under the new Charter<sup>(1)</sup>.

While the Mayor's Court was composed of a Mayor and nine Aldermen, the Court of the Recorder was composed of the Mayor and three of the Aldermen, the Recorder presiding. His presence was deemed to be generally essential to the exercise of the Court's jurisdiction; but he was vested with the power of delegating his authority to the other members of the Court in his absence. The Recorder, either with the Mayor or with one of the Aldermen, constituted a Court for all purposes of the Charter<sup>(2)</sup>. The Jurisdictions created by the Charter were similar to those of the Supreme Court at Calcutta, and the details of its procedure were also much the same. It was determined not to have Pundits or Moulvies as referees about the laws of the Indians, but to trust rather to the available sources of information, as questions that arose might call for. The same course was followed, in the Supreme Court of Madras, that superseded the Recorder's Court, on 4th September 1801, with Sir Thomas Strange as the first Chief Justice.

### III

#### Some Instructive Findings of the Court

(1) *Park v Mootiah*; and *Mootiah v Park*. March 4 to April 30, 1799

*(Illustrative of the corrupt dealings of English officials with the Nawab.)*

The original bill was filed in the Mayor's Court in 1794 to recover the sum of 59,000 *pagodas* upon a note dated 30th June 1780, payable in three months, and on a mortgage bond of 21st August following, alleged to have been given for the balance of an account then settled.

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<sup>1</sup>The ancient institution of the Choultry Court for deciding disputes of landed property and registering property transfers among 'natives', which was transferred to the Court of Coutcherry, was finally abolished in March 1800, and its records were transferred to the Court of the Recorder. (P. Consultations, 18th and 19th March 1800).

<sup>2</sup>"The Court of the Recorder of Madraspatnam" should be holden by and before one principal Judge, who should be called the Recorder of Madraspatnam and should be the President of the Said Court, and by and before the Mayor and three of the Aldermen of Madraspatnam to be from time to time selected in rotation to be assistant of Judges thereof all Judicial powers and authorities heretofore exercised by the Mayor's Court at Madras, and by the Governor and Council as a Court of Appeal from the same, and by the Court of Oyer and Terminer and Goal delivery, have by virtue of the directions contained in His Majesty's Letters Patent, thereby ceased and determined; and that all Civil, Criminal, Ecclesiastical and Admiralty Jurisdiction will hereafter be exercised in the Court of the Recorder of Madras." (Fort St. George Consultation, 1st November, 1798.)

The answer of Mootiah admitted the execution of the note and bond, in favour of the Complainant's testator Douglass; but it stated, that Douglass was the confidential agent of a gentleman of the name of *Johnson*, who was the party interested in these instruments; and they had been executed by Vaidyanatha the intestate, at the instance of the then Nawab of the Carnatic, in consideration of services rendered to him by *Johnson*, Vaidyanatha and Douglass having been both merely nominal parties in the transaction.

The Recorder's Judgment dismissing the original bill reveals the consideration which was the basis of the charge against the bond, as one which would not be endured by the law and would not bear the light of scrutiny. It is a revealing page in the book of corruption that was then so rife in Madras.

It further says:—"The Government of this Presidency having in 1779, taken possession of the Guntoor Circar, *Mr. Johnson* being at that time a Member of the Council, overtures were made to him by the then Nawab, through the mediation (as appears) of one *Bagavanloo*, that if he would, in Council, promote his Highness's views of obtaining possession of this Circar, he would give him 50,000 Pagodas; that this being agreed to by *Johnson*, a bond was given by the Nawab for the money, which not being paid, was renewed, and renewed again; but the better to cover what was to be concealed, and that a Councillor's name might not appear in a transaction of such a nature, it was renewed in the name of Douglass, the Plaintiff's testator, the notorious agent, as stands proved, of this gentleman's durbar corruptions."

"It is indeed a contract that must stamp this gentleman's name with discredit, as long as it shall be remembered; a contract, which neither he, nor his confidential agents representing him, can recover upon."

"It is void by the common law, and the reason why the common law says such contracts are void, is for the public good;—You shall not stipulate for iniquity—All writers upon our law agree in this; no polluted hand shall touch the pure fountains of justice—whoever is a party to an unlawful contract, if he have once paid the money stipulated to be paid in pursuance of it, he shall not have the help of a Court to fetch it back again. If it is not paid, the party claiming it shall not make a Court of Justice auxiliary to his corruptness. "*Procul! O! Procul este profani!*"

FRANK v. BARRETT.

(2) Another interesting case of March 1799 on the Plea Side was based on a question whether a person in the service of the Nawab

of the Carnatic was entitled to diplomatic privilege. The defendant Barrett was the Principal Secretary and English Interpreter of the Nawab, as certified by an affidavit sworn by John Battley, the Nawab's Persian Translator. The plea of Barrett was that the Nawab was living within the British Presidency, though he was a Sovereign and independent Prince, and that he was not employing any wakil or ambassador for himself, but personally regulating all his relations with the Company. Barrett having been his Principal Secretary and English Interpreter, by reason "of all and singular the premises aforesaid, by the law and custom of nations, and the statute made in the seventh year of the Reign of Queen Anne, intituled *"An Act for preserving the privileges of Ambassadors, and other public Ministers of foreign Princes and States,"*—he was not liable, nor bound to answer the plaint. The suit stopped at this stage, the defendant satisfying the demand.

It may be noted here that even as early as 1779 a collision had occurred between the Sheriff and the Nawab's guards, on the occasion of the Sheriff attempting to take possession of a house belonging to Prince Amiru'l Umara, the second son of the Nawab, which had been sold by the Court after an action was brought against the Prince for debt; and as the latter did not appear in Court, judgment was given against him (*vide* Minutes of the Mayor's Court, 21st September 1799). The Nawab wrote in consequence to the Governor requesting exemption from the jurisdiction of the Mayor's Court for himself, his family and servants; and his letter of the 9th October 1779, was as follows:—

"Some of my Family having lately experienced some trouble from the Orders of the Mayor's Court, which gave me much uneasiness as I have already acquainted you, I should be deficient to myself and to the high Station in which the Almighty has been pleased to place me if I did not complain of it as an infringement of the rights of an independent Prince in strict alliance with their own Sovereign, who has quitted his Capital for many Years with a view of strengthening and establishing his Friendship and connection with the English Nation by residing amongst them. (P.C. vol. cxxii., 26th October, 1779.)<sup>(5)</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Closely related to the subject was this Presentment on two occasions of the Grand Jury of the Madraspatnam Sessions, drawing attention to the prevalence of hooliganism in the village of Triplicane, adjacent to the Nawab's residence at Chopauk, where most of his followers lived. The Presentment of the first sessions of 1790, was forwarded by the Recorder to Government, with the remark that Triplicane was within the jurisdiction of his Court. Lord Mornington, the Governor-General who was at Madras at the time and in control of the Government, answered on 2nd February 1790, a severe letter of warning to Nawab Umdatul Umara asking him to prevent such disorders.

## (3) JOHNSTON v. EAST INDIA COMPANY, JULY 1799.

Another suit on the Plea Side, decided on 1st July 1799, was on the question whether the Plaintiff was entitled to a verdict and for how much, on account of the grain delivered by the Nawab of the Carnatic in discharge of a war subsidy under a particular treaty and received. It was held that the grain so delivered, was not to be regarded as revenue in the hands of Government so as to be within the restriction of the Charter and excluding that particular subject from the jurisdiction of the Court. The argument for considering the grain as the Company's revenue was that "it was delivered and received in part payment of four-fifths of the revenues of the Carnatic, under the war article of the treaty of 1767; and that the Nawab, having had credit given to him for it, as such in account, it thereby became revenue in the hands and under the management of the Governor in Council."

The Judgment of the Recorder was as follows:—"It is then, an appropriation of so much of the Nawab's revenue for the purpose of a war subsidy; and a war subsidy payable out of his revenue, as every subsidy, from one state to another, must issue from the revenues of the State that engages to pay it. But this no more made it Company's revenue, than where a man pays a debt out of his salary, the money so paid becomes salary, in the hands of the creditor who receives it. By the payment, the property is changed, and what was salary in the hands of the debtor, becomes an unqualified sum of money in those of the person receiving it. So here, the grain in question, on being transferred, ceased to be revenue, and became subsidy, applicable, not to the ordinary purposes of revenue, but to the expenses of the war only, by the particular stipulations of the treaty."

"It would seem, therefore, for anything contained in the first plea to the contrary, that the subject matter of it is within the Court's jurisdiction."

## (4) PLEA SIDE-DOE ON DEMISE OF LATOUR v. ROE. 10th April 1801

A double issue was involved in this case for ejection, to recover possession of a house in Pudupakam in Madras, of Khadar Nawaz Khan who claimed to be a servant of Nawab Umdatul-Umara and in immediate attendance on him. The first issue was that the Khan was advised that "neither he, nor his house and garden were, by the laws of nations, and of England, subject, to the Court's jurisdiction." The affidavit also said that the Nawab, who was the real creditor, was ready and willing to come to a fair settlement with the lessors of the Plaintiff, and to do them ample justice, if they would refer their accounts, without reserve, to arbitration, so that His



(5) VEERAPERMAILL PILLAY v. NARAIN PILLAI & OTHERS, EXECUTORS OF  
COLUNDA VEERAPERMAILL

The case is illustrative of the Court proceeding to decide on some intricate points of the Hindu Law, pertaining to adoption and disposition of property; and the parties were well-known persons in the Madras society of those days.

The following note and several quotations above have been taken from Thomas Strange's *Notes of Cases in Madras from 1798 to 1816*. Strange resigned his office of Chief Justice in 1817 when he returned to England. He has remarked that the Madras judicature had attained "a maturity beyond its years" and it "embraced every species of jurisdiction known to our juridical constitution." He further remarks that "in deciding suits involving the interpretation of the laws of the Indians, the trust imposed on the Bench should be most delicate and should be never satisfied by a mere reference to a Pundit or a Moulavie."

Strange thus summarises his views as to Hindu adoption:—

August 5th, 1801.

"If a Hindu by his will expresses a wish to be represented by the unborn son of a particular person whom he names, who has but one son at the time, and who has no other living at the death of the testator, his widow is not bound to wait indefinitely the birth of a second son, but may adopt any competent person she thinks proper.

Essentials of adoption by the Hindu law, are the giving and receiving.

"It is not necessary that the person adopted by a widow, after the death of her husband, should have been named by him. It is sufficient that she had his authority to adopt, express or implied. This is indispensable.

"The adoption of an elder son is improper, but not invalid.—If a man have two wives, and by the first a son, and by the second several, the elder of those by the younger wife may be given and received in adoption.

"If the father of the boy to be given be dead, the consent of the elder son, as representing him is sufficient; the consent of the mother may be presumed from circumstances.

"The adoption is good, tho' the adopted be above five years of age, and have under-gone the ceremony of purification, provided he be the son of a near relation of the adopter, tho' not a *sagotra*, i.e. not descended in a direct male line from one common male ancestor.

"The restriction as to age respects only the three superior casts, and is not binding upon Soodras; and with respect to the superior classes, the criterion is, not the particular age of the adopted, but whether he has undergone the ceremony of inauguration, namely, that of tonsure and boring the ears.

"The property in dispute in this case was considerable, amounting to between two and three hundred thousand Pagodas.

"It embraced a number of questions on the right and mode of adoption. The principal one, as to the right of making the one which had taken place, arose on the will of a Hindu; a disposition of property, according to our sense of it, not known to the Hindu law, and to be defended in our Courts, in which it has perhaps improperly been admitted, only by analogy to the Hindu of gifts. Much as the case was contested on other points, the question as to the competency of a Hindu to make a will was not touched in it, both parties, the Complainant and Defendants, claiming under the bequests and directions which it contained.....this is certain, that a dying Hindu, failing male issue, may authorize an adoption to take effect after his death, and this by writing, as well as otherwise. The will in this case therefore, with reference to the parts of it that were in question, must have been construed as a direction in writing by the testator to adopt. As such, it would have been unquestionably good, and the discussion would have turned, as it did, upon the construction to be put upon it."

The will in dispute is illustrative of institutions and modes of thinking among the Hindus, and, as such, a matter of historical curiosity.

"The cause was heard upon bill, answers, and deposition. Among the witnesses were a number of Sastrees, who had been examined to the different points of Hindu law, upon which chiefly the suit depended. There were not fewer than ten or twelve on either side; and their answers upon every point, were in direct opposition to each other. From such oracles an English Court was not likely to derive much satisfaction. That there was a great deal of corruption among them was plain. Under these circumstances, resort was had to other sources of instruction, as to the law, as will appear from the judgment."

It was one of the last given in the Court of the Recorder. The Supreme Court shortly after succeeding, an application was made to it for a rehearing, but withdrawn; nor was there any appeal, the parties finally acquiescing in the opinion delivered.

The peculiarity of the will in question is seen in the following paragraph translated from it which has been compared with the will of the Raja of Rajashahi addressed to Rani Bhushani Devi authorizing her to adopt a son after his decease.

Vayalur Veerapermall Pillai in his will duly witnessed thus provided:—

"You are to give my emeral ear-ring to Iyah Pillay. If Iyah Pillay begets a son, beside his present one, you are to keep him to my lineage; and name him Colunda Veerapermall Pillay. You are to give him a good education, and introduce him to the best society, giving him the jewels that are in the house, the remaining garden, and remaining villages."

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Before becoming Principal of R. D. M. College, Sivaganga, S. I., Dewan Bahadur C. S. Sriinivaachari had served for many years as Professor and Head of the Department of History and Politics, Annamalai University. An enthusiastic member of the Indian Historical Records Commission, the Dewan Bahadur is an author of many important publications based on original records. As Convener of the Madras Regional Records Survey Committee, he has brought to light a large collection of records in private custody.

# BOUNDARY DISPUTES BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND MAYUR- BHANJ IN THE 18TH CENTURY

(MAINLY BASED ON THE MIDNAPUR DISTRICT RECORDS)

(By Tarit Kumar Mukherji)

The river Subarnarekha was looked upon generally as the limit of the Company's territory on the west and that of the Maratha occupations on the east. The river however was not the real boundary as the Marathas held territory north-east of the river in parganas Bograi, Kamarda, Pataspur and Shahbandar. The Company's possessions on the right bank of the river included among others Nayabasan, Ghatsila, Janpore, and Bhelorachur. Nayabasen was one of the Parganas in the western jungles forming the thana of Janpore.<sup>1</sup> It was situated partly on the west and partly on the east of the river. Pargana Bhelorachar (now within the District of Balasore) was the only Pargana that the Company possessed "to the southward of Subarnarekha."<sup>2</sup>

To the west of the river was the State of Mayurbhanj the ruler of which became a tributary of the Marathas after the latter had made themselves master of Orissa. The northern boundry of Mayurbhanj terminated at Nayagramgarh. From there the eastern boundary commenced and extended upto the village Mulida in the pargana Bhelorachar, a few miles south of Rajghat. To all intents and purposes the ruler of the State was independent. The Maratha claim to supremacy appears to have always been resisted by the Raja. Bhowani Pundit in 1764 expressed his intention "to root out the rebellious Zemindars of Harrurpoor" (Capital of Mayurbhanj).<sup>3</sup> In 1766 Thomas Motte while at Balasore wrote, "There is usually at Balasore a party of thirty horse and five hundred foot but at this time they are with Pellajee collecting the tribute of the Mahur Bunje country".<sup>4</sup> During their long rule over Orissa (1751-1803) the Marathas seldom succeeded in reducing the Rajah of Mayurbhanj to submission. Even as late as 1784 an attempt was made to crush Damodar Bhanja but it proved to be of no account. On November

<sup>1</sup>Letter from the Collector to Mr. Duncan, Revenue Dept., dated Midnapore, 24th August 1782.

<sup>2</sup>Letter from the Resident to the Hon'ble Harry Vereist, dated the 5th May 1767.

<sup>3</sup>Calendar of Persian Correspondence, 1764, letter No. 2481.

<sup>4</sup>Early European Travellers, p. 4.

25 that year the Collector in a letter referred to what had been reported to him by Captain Hamilton. Captain Hamilton, Commander of Company's Troops at Jaleswar wrote, "The Rajah of Mohrbunj has again started creating troubles; Moodajee wishes to crush him and I flatter myself I should require two small guns to take his country. Rajahram Pundit is now with a large army at Nilgurrya endeavouring to reduce the Rajah but I hear he will not effect it".<sup>5</sup>

Fear of punishment at the hands of the Marathas led Damodar Bhanja to seek the friendship of the English. Early in 1761, Damodar Bhanja sent his vakeel Moti Ram to Mr. Vansittart. The latter acknowledged Rajah's profession of loyalty to the Company and sent in turn Mr. Johnstone to Mayurbhanj and instructed him to treat the Rajah in a friendly manner.<sup>6</sup> In 1767, Lt. Fergusson "settled the parganas (Nayabasan and Bhelorachar) in the Mayurbhanj Rajah's possession for Rs. ( ) a year".<sup>7</sup> In 1768 when Sambhaji Ganesh the Maratha Subahdar of Cuttack, in a letter, expressed his intention of invading Bengal and sought his assistance, Damodar Bhanja pleaded his inability owing to scarcity of rice. Bulbuddar Bhanj the Rajah's envoy to the Resident of Midnapore, stated that the Rajah was desirous of shaking off the yoke of the Marathas, and that his country was so advantageously situated that with a very little assistance from the English he should at any time be able to prevent the Marathas from entering into Bengal from the southward.<sup>8</sup>

This friendly relation between the Rajah and the English however did not last long. During the closing years of the rule of Warren Hastings, dispute arose between the Rajah and the Company over the possession of the two Parganas, Nayabasan and Bhelorachar. It appears from the records that since 1767 the Rajah held the pargana of Nayabasan as a revenue paying estate and quite distinct from his independent territory. Great difficulty was experienced in realising the government demands from him. From 1777 onwards the Rajah became very irregular in his payments. "With regard to Damoodur bunje, Zeminder of Nayabusssun", wrote the Resident, "I beg leave to observe that in 1184 (B.S.) Mr. Higginson, Chief of Burdwan, in conformity to the orders of the Hon'ble Board made mocurrer settlement of the Junguls and fixed for the Jumma of Nyabusssun Alla Sicca Rs. 5293-12-13"<sup>9</sup>. In 1184 the balance due

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<sup>5</sup>Public Letter Copy Book, 1784, Vol. 8, Part I.

<sup>6</sup>Calendar of Persiau Correspondence, Letter Nos. 1020, 1112.

<sup>7</sup>Midnapore Records, Vol. I, P. 147.

<sup>8</sup>From the Resident to the Hon'ble Harry Verelst, dated Midnapore the 5th July 1768.

<sup>9</sup>From the Collector to the Hon'ble Warren Hastings, dated Midnapore, the 10th Oct. 1779.

from him was Rs. 2174-4-15, in 1185 it was Rs. 1273-5-8 and in 1186 Rs. 2043-13-4. The Rajah on his part complained of over assessment and demanded a reduction of Rs. 2000 from his fixed mocrurer settlement. "The only alternatives", observed the Resident, "that occur to me is either to comply in some small degree with his demand .....or to take the pergunna entirely out of his hands and thereby supersede his influence, by what the Tannadar would consequently acquire, when supported by a small military force that might be stationed in the Killa of Nyabassaun, at present occupied by the Rajah's sardars and pikes".<sup>10</sup>

The company at that time was not in a position to apply force against the Rajah. But it did not however accept the Rajah's proposal for a reduction in his Jumma. This offended the Rajah and he waited for an opportunity to extend his sway over the Company's possessions on the right bank of the Subarnarekha. Chimnaji Bapoo, proceeding from Nagpur "by studied deviation and delays" reached Cuttack in May 1780. In March 1781, irregular bands of Maratha horse started creating widespread disturbances in the district of Jaleswar. The Resident reported that "fifty Maratha horse made an inroad into our pergunna of Belorachour, plundered Suntospore and four other villages on the west side of the Subarnarica" between the 2nd and 7th March. On the 8th another "band of 200 Maratha horse after plundering some villages in Ismailpore and Lampochaur proceeded to Mohunpore a considerable town where are sundry cloth factories belonging to the Company and to several Bengal merchants; these they plundered as well as the houses belonging to Ryots".<sup>11</sup>

Taking advantage of the confusion resulting from the inroads of the Marathas, Damodar Bhanja arrived at Bhelorachar and plundered several inhabitants. His Choudries and Naibs started collecting revenue from the Ryots. The Thanadar of Jaleswar reported that "upon the first incursion of the Pindaries the Zemindars and many of the Ryots went to the Ghur of Amerdaw in Bhelorachour, that soon after the Mahr Bhunj Rajah taking the opportunity entered Amerdaw, and plundered those he found there". Major Macpherson with his regiment "not above 1½ cose distant from Amerdaw could not come to the aid of the unhappy riots; as any troops sent across the Subarnrica might alarm the Morattoes and impede the negotiations on foot", between Warren Hastings and Chimnaji Bapoo.<sup>12</sup> The

<sup>10</sup>From the Collector to the Hon'ble Warren Hastings, dated Midnapore, the 4th July 1780.

<sup>11</sup>From the Collector to the Hon'ble Warren Hastings, dated Midnapore, the 12th March 1781.

<sup>12</sup>From the Collector to Mr. David Anderson and Members of the Board of Revenue, dated Midnapore the 24th March 1781.

Rajah was audacious enough to send his people opposite Fort Knox at Jaleswar in pursuit of the riots of Bhelorchar; but they were stopped by Major Macpherson who threatened to fire upon them from the fort "in case they came within reach in such pursuits".<sup>13</sup>

The presence of the Maratha horse in the vicinity of Mayurbhanj reminded the Rajah of his allegiance to the Maratha Government. He proposed to pay his tribute from the collections of Nayabasan. Anguin Paury, the Rajah's Vakeel was asked to send the "two next kists of that pergenna directly to him intending it as a part of the tribute to be given to the Morattoe Chief whose troops he expected, having received a letter from Chimnaji of his intentions of marching through Harriorpore though not in hostile manner. Anguin Paury likewise mentioned that the Mohrbunj Rajah had removed his Zenana and effects from Harriorpore into places of greater safety".<sup>14</sup>

"Improving upon his original claim of only 81 villages in the pergunna Belora-chour", wrote the Resident, "the Rajah has by his own authority taken seisin of the whole pergunna and finding no effectual opposition to his encroachments but rather a calm uninterrupted enjoyment he has enlarged his views and on the 8th of this month he sent his moonshey to erect a staff and lay claim to Dhonpore and seven other villages on the Western side of the Subarnirica forming part of the Pergunna Jellasure" .....and "has likewise seized Punnysuary, Multanny, and Razigaut, the three Gauts belonging to Jellasure and directed a toll to be levied upon passengers and goods".<sup>15</sup>

By promising to pay his tribute the willy Rajah succeeded in disarming the suspicion of the Maratha Government and in enlisting the support of Nana Rao, the Maratha Foudar of Balasore in his claim to Bhelorchur. On May 31, 1781, the Resident wrote to Mr. Anderson, "I should conclude from the proceedings of the Mohrbunj Rajah that he has been endeavouring to deceive the Phousdar of Balasore to screen himself from his payments there.....copy of a letter the Mohrbunj vakeel brought me from Nunna Row, Phousdar of Balasore, wherein, he advises me to give quite possession in conformity to the Governor General's order of the villages claimed by Mohrbunj in Bheloriachour because he was indebted to the Morattoes two Laacs of Rupees. In my reply which I likewise enclose I observed that he must have been misinformed relative to the

<sup>13</sup>From the Collector to Mr. David Anderson & Members of the Board of Revenue dated 9th May 1781.

<sup>14</sup>From the Collector to the Hon'ble Warren Hastings dated 7th March 1781.

From the Collector to Mr. David Anderson and Members of the Board of Revenue, dated 31st May 1781.

Governor General's orders—that the lands in dispute belonged to the Company, which nevertheless the Mohrbunj Rajah had already taken possession of by his own authority; that however it could not be expected he should be suffered to collect from the Company's lands and riots in order to pay his balance to the Morattoes.....  
 .....No other opportunity than the one that offered would have availed the Mohrbunj Rajah in thus putting himself in possession for had not the Subarnirica, at that time been the Ne plus Ultra, to the Company's troops on the one side and to the Morattoes on the other", troops might have been sent "which would have effectually prevented the Rajah from seizing the districts".<sup>16</sup>

Bhelorachur formed one of the parganas of the Chuckla Jaleswar. It devolved to the Company upon the cession of that Chuckla. This was never disputed by the Marathas. The pargana had all along paid either peshcus or rent to the Company either through the Canongoe or Thanadar of Jaleswar. In the Tuxeen papers the Zemindar appeared paramount of the whole pargana consisting of 113 villages; the claim of the Mayurbhunj Rajah to 81 villages had no "other foundation than his having at different times but with long interruptions held them in farm; before they came into his hands they were held from the Zemindar as Etmaum by two Sardar pikes of Jallesore; ever since the year 1178 the Mohrbunj Rajah has held no part of the pergunnah".<sup>17</sup>

On July 25, 1781, Mr. Anderson was informed by the Collector of Midnapore that troops sent to Bheloriachur had done their duty and that the Tahsildar was then in possession of the villages lately held by the Mayurbhanj Rajah.<sup>18</sup> The Collector in another letter pointed out that two companies of troops should be stationed in the frontier districts "to deter the Rajah from attempts on that quarter, and drive him out should he undertake any".<sup>19</sup> With regard to Nayabasan a settlement was reached in 1784, whereby the Rajah agreed to pay a yearly revenue of Rs. 3,200 for his estates in Midnapore.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>From the Collector to Mr. David Anderson & Members of the Board of Revenue dated 9th May 1781.

<sup>18</sup>From the Collector to Mr. David Anderson & etc., dated 25th July 1781.

<sup>19</sup>From the Collector to the Hon'ble Warren Hastings, dated 3rd October, 1781.

<sup>20</sup>Letter Book, Midnapore Collectorate, 1784, Vol. 9, Bengal District Gazetteer Vol. 2 P. 38.



## VISUAL TELEGRAPHS, CALCUTTA TO CHUNAR, 1816-23:

[By R. H. Phillimore]\*

The archives of the Government of India contain many early stories of sad failures, brave experiments, and glorious achievements. It is possible that this story of the *Visual Telegraph* falls somewhere between the first two.

In 1813 William Boyce of Bombay offered to establish a system of visual telegraphs from one end of India to another, improving on a model that had been successful in Europe. The Government of Bengal was interested, and after consulting the Surveyor General appointed a Telegraph Committee, with the Surveyor General as President, to examine and report on the subject. After obtaining the view of William Lambton and others, this Committee recommended that survey should be made of a line from Calcutta to Chunar that might be extended later through Nagpur to Bombay.

George Everest, then a young artillery officer, who was later to become Surveyor General of India, and whose name has been given to the highest mountain in the world, was given charge of this survey which he completed by October 1818. The line followed generally the "new military road" through Hazaribagh that was later abandoned for the Grand Trunk Road which ran further north, avoiding the high lands of Chota Nagpur.

Major Playfair, Superintendent of the Military Roads, constructed the towers before 1821, and a succession of Officers held the post of Superintendent of Telegraphs till it was abolished in 1830, and the towers abandoned to their fate. A few of those between Calcutta and Burdwan were made use of by the Great Trigonometrical Survey about 1830.

The following extracts are taken from original correspondence of the Survey of India and consultations of the Political and Military Departments of Bengal:

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\*Colonel R H Phillimore, C.I.E., D.S.O. (late Royal Engineers and Survey of India) has undertaken, on his retirement from Government service in 1934, the monumental task of compiling a history of Surveys in India from the earliest days, of which the first volume, 18th century and the Volume II (1800 to 1815) have already seen light. The third volume is designed to cover the period 1815 to 1800 and the Colonel's ambition is to carry this important history forward to 1883. A corresponding member of the Indian Historical Records Commission, Colonel Phillimore has been actively co-operating with the activities of the Commission and the National Archives of India and has also contributed several illuminating articles to the *Indian Archives*.

Boyce, to the Government of Bombay, 6th December 1813<sup>1</sup> submits "a plan for establishing a Telegraph communication across the Peninsula of India.....I have effected improvements in the Telegraph which I wish to introduce, which render it infinitely superior to any Telegraph whatever, and.....I have conquered difficulties in the system in general which have hitherto been regarded both in England and on the Continent of Europe as insuperable barriers to telegraphic perfection.....

"When an overland dispatch arrived, or any news of importance by sea, it could be communicated to the Supreme Government in half an hour, and an answer received back in the next half hour".

In passing this proposal to the Supreme Government the Bombay Government remarked, 13th January 1814<sup>2</sup>, that "it is probable that a man better qualified than Mr. Boyce.....could hardly be found. He was for some years employed.....in the management of the Telegraphs in Ireland, and there is every reason to believe that he would discharge the trust reposed in him with fidelity and ability".

Boyce was optimistic as to the labour and expense that would be entailed. He estimated the cost of each tower at Rs. 2,500 and suggested two lines: Route 1. Bombay-Poona-Hyderabad-Ellore-Cuttack-Calcutta, 75 stations;—Route 2. Bombay, along coast to Mangalore, then Seringapatam-Bangalore-Madras, and from Madras to Calcutta, 133 stations.

Government asked the Surveyor General, Charles Crawford, for his comments, and he replied, 20th June 1814<sup>3</sup>; "Whilst I have the highest opinion of the great superiority of Mr. Boyce's Telegraph over any other invention of the same kind, and also duly acknowledge the numberless advantages that would accrue,..... yet I cannot help differing in opinion from him when he proposes to commence the towers without having the whole extent of country examined by a skilful Engineer.....Nor do I think with him that the building of wooden houses by way of lessening the expense would answer, as they would be so liable to such rapid decay, not only from the nature of this climate, but also from the destructive nature of the white ants.

"In respect to the number of towers required, I do not think it could ever be even nearly guessed at for, as the telegraphic part of the tower is only about 16 or 17 feet high, when a jungly tract:

<sup>1</sup> N.A.I. Pol. Cons. 4 March 1814, No. 10.

<sup>2</sup> N.A.I. Pol. Cons. 4 March 1814, No. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Survey Records, DDn. 143; pp. 73-8.

was to be got through, they could not see each other at a furlong's distance.

"In Mr. Boyce's laudable anxiety to carry this most useful plan into execution he has, I am afraid, overlooked some obstacles that, had he travelled much in the Peninsula, he would have found very difficult to overcome. I shall first take notice of the danger from the Pindaries or any other lawless tribes for, although the towers may be musquet-proof, and sufficiently strong to prevent the tower being carried by force, yet how are they to procure water or provisions if the tower must be protected? then only one man can go on this errand, whose fate could easily be guessed were the Pindaries determined to get rid of those who are so very likely to raise their suspicions or provoke their enmity.....In many places where towers could be found most absolutely requisite, the distance from any supplies, and what would be still worse not being able to procure water or of its being bad, would prove a difficulty very difficult to be overcome....

"The hills in general in this country are universally unhealthy and without running water, and stagnant water found among the rocks is sure to bring on fevers of the worst kind. Indeed, I cannot help thinking that the want of water fit to drink would prove one of the most unsurmountable difficulties....In most of these jungles it would often happen.....that in all probability the whole of the complement of men would be sometimes all down in fevers at the same time".

Boyce was summoned to Calcutta, and in a letter dated 3rd August: 1816<sup>1</sup> asked to run an experimental line between Fort William and Barrackpore. In another letter from the Military Department, dated 12th August 1817<sup>2</sup>, Government nominated Lt. Colonel Mackenzie, Surveyor General, to be President, and six other military officers to be members, of "a Committee for the purpose of establishing an experimental Telegraphic communication between Fort William and Nagpore.....The whole question of applying that mode of communication to India being deemed important and interesting, it has been judged expedient that you should progressively extend your enquiries beyond the point more immediately submitted to you, and should hold in view the probable extension of the system at a future period".

On the 21st October Government wrote to the Telegraph Committee<sup>3</sup> acknowledging "the receipt of your letter of the 20th

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<sup>1</sup> N.A.I. Pol. Cons. 3 August 1816, No. 38. We have found nothing further about Boyce.

<sup>2</sup> N.A.I. Mil. Cons. 12 August 1817, No. 119-122; Survey Records, 62 (p. 71).

<sup>3</sup> N.A.I. Mil. Cons. 21 October 1817, No. 106.

ultimo, with its enclosures, reporting the reasons which induce you to give a preference to the line of the military road over that of the river for the telegraphic communication between the Presidency and Chunar, and recommending that two officers might be appointed to survey the preferred line.....

"The Hon'ble the Vice President in Council.....entirely concurs in the preference you have given to.....the military road, and has accordingly appointed Captain-Lieutenant Everest of the Regiment of Artillery and Lieutenant Ferguson of the Ramghur Battalion to survey and report on that line under your directions".

The Committee then wrote to Lambton, 9th January 1818<sup>1</sup>, asking for his opinion on the general question; "The plan itself is a very simple one. Mr. Boyce.....has.....four balls which, being numbered from 1 to 4, are singly or by combination sufficient to express the nine units. For applying this system therefore to written language, it was only necessary to form a vocabulary of all words and forms of words that can be useful, together with names of persons and places, and then to number them in such a manner as to exclude 0 or zero.....The apparatus for communicating them is composed of a mast and yard, to the latter of which are affixed four pullies serving to raise and lower the balls, which are from four to six feet in diameter according to the distance at which they are to be seen, and made of the lightest bamboo work covered with black canvas.....

"The difficulties arising from the nature of the ground in this side of India are those peculiar to flat countries abounding in woods and forests, which being very lofty exact a corresponding elevation in the telegraphic building.....The other obstacles arising from the variations of the atmosphere prevail very generally to a certain degree.....Enquiries on this head may furnish the Committee with information to enable them to trace their lines in such a manner as to conduct them through those parts of the country which are least subject to these inconveniences....

"Commercial advantages of very considerable public service are anticipated from the increased rapidity of conveying intelligence across the Peninsula. Bombay in fact may be considered as the key to the Persian Gulph, the Red Sea, the Mauritius, the Cape of Good Hope, and even during that portion of the year when the navigation of the Bay of Bengal is interrupted to China and the Eastern Seas. A safe and rapid communication with the western coast of India is therefore an object of the utmost consequence....

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<sup>1</sup> Survey Records, DDn. 67; p. 71.

"On the expediency of establishing one general line of connection between the three Presidencies,.....the different lines would naturally meet both to the east and the west of Berar. Such general line should traverse the several Presidencies in their greatest dimension consistent with the avoidance of too great a sacrifice in point of distance".

The Committee suggested two alternative routes to both Madras and Bombay, with distances thus estimated:

1st	Calcutta to Hyderabad via Orissa	790 miles		760
	Hyderabad to Madras	310	.. to Bombay	440
	Calcutta to Madras via Orissa & Hyderabad	1100		
	Calcutta to Bombay via Orissa & Hyderabad	...		1230
2nd	Calcutta to Nagpur via Allahabad	750 miles		750
	Nagpur to Hyderabad	300	.. to Bombay	500
	Hyderabad to Madras	310		
	Calcutta to Madras via Nagpur & Hyderabad	1360		
	Calcutta to Bombay via Allahabad & Nagpur	...		1250
The whole line, with branches, by	1st route	...		1540
	2nd route	...		1860

Lambton replied on 30th January 1818<sup>1</sup>, pointing out that in the south peninsula "there is a part of the year when the tops of the highest mountains.....are frequently concealed in fogs, either the whole or during the greatest part of the day. This happens before the south-west monsoon sets in, and that generally from the beginning of February when the atmosphere becomes loaded with humid vapour and assumes a hazy appearance. After the rains commence the fair intervals are remarkably favourable for observing distant objects....In advancing into the Nizam's dominions...excepting the months of March, April, and May, my survey has been carried on during the whole year....The features of the country are uncommonly favourable.

"With respect to the two lines of communication...between Calcutta and the other two Presidencies,...your reasoning as to the importance of Bombay in a commercial point of view requires no support from me. But when to these we add others concerning its consequence as a naval station, and....if we take into consideration

<sup>1</sup> Survey Records, DDn. 63; p. 463.

the direct communication with the great military stations in the western provinces and in the Deccan, all circumstances taken together must give a decided preference to the route by Nagpur".

The Committee wrote again to consult Lambton on 26th February 1818<sup>1</sup>: "The Telegraphic survey under Captain Everest reached Shérgatty about the middle of the current month. His distances average nearly  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles, but, as a great portion of the country hitherto passed over is covered with thick forest, that average may be considered rather low, and in fact the distances between his stations since he has reached the open country have occasionally been as high as 12 and 13 miles.

"The surveyors were furnished with the common achromatic telescopes generally used by military men in the trenches, or in reconnoitring parties. They are from 2 feet 6 inches in length when drawn out to their focus, and their object glass is about 1.6 inch in diameter...All of them...are stated to be insufficient for a greater distance than 7 miles in the low woody country, and somewhat more on the open plains...I beg the favour of your opinion as to the power of telescopes which...you would deem sufficient to ensure a view of telegraphic spheres of 6 feet diameter throughout the year at the distances of 7, 9, 12, and 14 miles".

Lambton replied on 6th March 1818<sup>2</sup>, that the power of telescope "would be best estimated by observing at what distance these balls can be clearly distinguished by the naked eye. For instance, if they can be seen at the distance of a mile sufficiently distinct...without the aid of a telescope, then a magnifying power of 7 would be proper for viewing the same object at the distance of 7 miles".

Everest and Ferguson spent the hot weather and rains of 1818 at Chunar working up maps and reports, Everest sending a full account to Lambton<sup>3</sup> on 1st June 1818, in which he states that through the plains "there is a peculiar vapour in the hot weather which affects the atmosphere at a less height than 100 feet above the surface of the earth, and causes so great a divergency in the rays of light that telescopes of large magnifying powers are of little use, and in such situations the telegraphic distances have seldom been greater than  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles, whilst in the hilly tracts 18 miles has not been too great".

On 10th September 1818 the Surveyor General wrote privately to the Military Secretary<sup>4</sup> that "the duty of surveying and select-

<sup>1</sup> Survey Records, DDn. 91; pp. 157-9.

<sup>2</sup> ib. 92; p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> ib. 91; pp. 163-70.

<sup>4</sup> ib. 154; pp. 13-19; cf. notice Asiatic Journal, XIX; (1825), p. 634.

ing the stations has been reported completed". The Committee hoped to have ready "for Lord Hastings' information on his arrival" all the temporary stations between Calcutta and Chunar, and that until the telegraph was "in a state of activity from Calcutta to Chunar" no further extension should be put in hand.

"It has been found by the late experiments that the medium distance of the stations from Calcutta to Chunar is nearly 10 miles. Though it is highly probable, and almost certain, that telegraphic stations may be extended throughout all India...by circuitous bendings, yet it is indispensibly necessary that the stations...should be previously sought for, examined, and after repeated trials only, determined, that the signals may be seen and repeated. There are other considerations that may afterwards affect the choice... Salubrity of air, convenience of water, markets, protection, etc." Mackenzie went on to emphasize that the actual line and its individual stations could only be chosen by an officer specially deputed to go over the ground for that purpose.

He admitted that his duties as President of the Telegraph Committee left "little spare time to other objects, however grateful... Had my official duties been cast in happier circumstances, I should have felt pleasure in the pursuit of a discovery that even before its establishment in England was a matter of contemplation, tho' not in this shape or name, with some of my early friends in India. So early as 1788 a project of the kind was submitted to a Governor of Madras (Sir Archibald Campbell)<sup>1</sup> for alarming the country in case of invasion". A yet earlier use of such signals was made in 1767 by Thomas Barnard to give warning of invasion of the Carnatic by Haidar Ali's horsemen.<sup>2</sup>

Everest and Ferguson were struck off duty on "the temporary erection of telegraphs" from 15th October 1818,<sup>3</sup> and Everest then marched down to Hyderabad to take up his appointment under Lambton as chief assistant in the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India. Ferguson was assistant on the construction of the permanent towers during 1820-21.

The survey, construction, and maintenance of the line of towers cost nearly five lakhs of rupees between 1816 and 1828. It is not known, however, though search in the National Archives might reveal, whether the towers were ever fully manned from one end to another of the 500 miles stretch—whether any message was ever

<sup>1</sup> Sir Archibald Campbell (1739-91), Govr. of Madras 1786-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Historical Records of the Survey of India*, Vol. 1, p. 311.

<sup>3</sup> N.A.I. Mil. Cons. 26 September 1818, No. 132-33; Survey Records, DDn. 133, pp. 399-400; Everest's maps; Survey Records, MRIO. 51(15), 81 (37-9).

transmitted—how long it took—and how far it was distorted! At any rate, in welcoming the decision to close down the department, the Directors recalled that they had from the first expressed great doubt as to its practical value<sup>1</sup>.

A note on one of the last of these towers that was still standing appeared in the *Calcutta Statesman* of 13th November 1939<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Court Despatch, 14 November 1832, para. 70 (replying to Ben. Pub. 27 April 1830, paras. 266-291).

<sup>2</sup> Article by Ramesh K. Ghoshal, *Statesman*, 13 November 1949, p. 13.



## THE OLD ENGLISH CORRESPONDENCE IN THE DISTRICT COLLECTORATES OF BENGAL

[By Tapan Kumar Ray Choudhury]

The class of documents known as 'the Old English Correspondence' in the record-offices of the district collectorates in Bengal is not entirely unfamiliar to persons interested in Indian historical records. Hunter in his *Bengal Ms. Records* (1782-1807) utilised a small fragment of this immense volume. The early statistical studies of the Bengal districts, e.g., Taylor's *Dacca* and Glazier's *Rangpur*, also made use of them. These records, of course, were drawn upon more copiously in *Hunter's Statistical Account of Bengal* and the *District Gazetteers*. But Firminger's *Midnapore District Records* (1763—1770) in two volumes is practically the only work in which a fraction of these documents were published. So the old English correspondence as an important source of British Indian History, distinct from the other records in the district collectorates, has remained practically unknown to present-day researchers.

The West Bengal Regional Records Survey Committee in course of its survey—work in eight district collectorates this term (1949—1950), was able to form some idea regarding the immense volume and importance of this class of documents. They cover nearly a century and half, extending from 1763 to 1899. As regards their quantity, the seven district collectorates of 24-Parganas, Nadia, Birbhum, Bankura, Hugli, Burdwan and Malda are said to possess 1609 volumes altogether. As the reports of the district record keepers on this score were checked up in most cases, this figure may be taken as being more or less authentic. And to this staggering number we have to add that of the volumes in the possession of the Midnapore district collectorate. According to the Register of Records, there are 3,469 bundles of old English correspondence in the record office of the district. The classified list alone accounts for 1197 volumes.

These volumes in every district are of a standard size each running into three to four hundred closely written pages, substantially bound. But with the exception of Midnapore, no list of these volumes, let

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alone their contents, could be found anywhere. At least in two districts, the record-keepers had no knowledge of even the existence of these volumes and they could be discovered only after a thorough and patient search. This state of affairs is due to the fact that the old English correspondence is of no use for current administrative purposes. So while all the other records, both current and non-current, are carefully preserved and listed, these volumes, so important to the researcher, have suffered from an understandable negligence. In some cases, large parts of these papers have apparently been destroyed. The Bankura Collectorate, for instance, has only eleven volumes in its possession, in strange contrast to the other collectorates mentioned above. Even where apparently there has not been any deliberate destruction, quite a number of volumes are known to have been lost or misplaced. The surviving ones also are not in too good a state of preservation. Pages of many volumes have partly been lost or moth-eaten; oftener still, the writing inside has become illegible due to the absence of proper methods of preservation. Still, fortunately, the bulk of these records is in a fairly good state, partly due to the quality of the paper and the binding.

These records may be broadly classified under two heads: letters received and letters issued. The former, apparently by far the larger in proportion, consists of letters received by the district authorities from the higher bodies in Calcutta and from their subordinates as also of petitions filed by various parties. The second type chiefly consists of copies of letters written by the district authorities to their superiors in Calcutta. Another principle of classification is current in several districts whereby the records are divided into three groups according to their nature: miscellaneous or general, judicial and excise. This principle, however, is not everywhere in vogue. The old English correspondence in the 24-Parganas Collectorate are classified under five heads: Khas Mahal, Khallery, Land Acquisition, Settlement, Magistracy and Miscellaneous. In Midnapore, they are of seven varieties: general, miscellaneous, salt, settlement, excise, wards department and embankment. All the eleven volumes in the Bankura Collectorate on the other hand belong to the class known as 'general' in the other districts.

A difficulty which faces the researcher in studying these papers, is the manner in which they have been bound together. In most cases, but for the broad classifications, no general principle,—chronological or subject-wise,—has been applied in grouping a number of papers together in a volume. Thus a single volume may contain papers scattered over a wide stretch of time. The only relieving feature is that all papers referring to one particular topic are to be found within the same covers.

As the volume and variety of the papers obviously suggest, very little of their actual contents could be studied in course of a single term. This was more so because the chief object of this year's survey-work was to form an over-all idea as regards the types and volume of records of historical importance in the district collectorates of Bengal. Thus the time at our disposal being short, a general method was followed in studying the contents of the old English correspondence. A few volumes belonging to different periods were picked up from each type and some of the letters contained in the volumes thus selected were thoroughly studied.

Such a perfunctory method,—though perhaps the best possible under the circumstances,—surely does not authorise us to make any general statements regarding the contents of those papers. And it ought to be made very clear at the outset that as regards the materials contained in the overwhelmingly large portion of these numerous volumes, we are still in the dark. Yet an analysis of the little we have seen will be enough to convey some idea of the importance of this source.

Subject to the limitations mentioned above, we may make some observations regarding the nature of these papers. Even from the small fragment we studied, it may confidently be asserted that this little-used source is sure to yield a very considerable amount of fresh data for the socio-economic and administrative history of the 18th (latter half) and 19th centuries, Hunter, in his preoccupation with revenue-history, ignored important aspects of the very papers he used. The *District Gazetteers* and the *Statistical Account* were concerned more with current conditions than with past history. Even Firminger's volumes dealing with a small period leave out much that is important. It appears that the 'letters issued' are likely to prove of greater value than the 'letters received'. For the latter are mostly in the nature of circulars or general instructions from the authorities in Calcutta. The 'letters issued', with local affairs and problems and thus afford a direct glimpse of the life of the people almost unique in character. Among the 'letters received' also there are those written by the subordinate officers in the mufassils which are at least as important as the 'letters issued'. But so far as we could see, such letters are comparatively slender in volume. The class of correspondence labelled 'judicial' is also comparatively less important. For these are mostly circulars issued by the *Sadr Nizamat Adalat* and so such volumes in the possession of the different collectorates are likely to be reproductions of the same matter in the main. But as these circulars often deal with affairs of importance or with some local problem, they are not without interest for the student of history. A large part of this immense volume, dealing with mere routine matters is, however, sure to prove useless from the view-point of the researcher.

A detailed account of the data collected this year from the old English correspondence will be out of place here. For such data have been fully discussed in the reports on the records available in the various district collectorates which are incorporated in the *Annual Report of the West Bengal Regional Records Survey Committee, 1949-'50*. Here we shall merely try to give some idea as to the various types of data found in this source by way of an indication of what it is likely to contain.

Even the cursory study of parts of a few volumes afforded a very clear glimpse of the actual workings of the Company's administration in Bengal. The problems of peace and security which faced the administration even in the last years of the 18th and the early years of the 19th century are vividly reflected in some letters. In 1785, an armed force was required as escort for sending revenue from Nadia, as the ordinary *barkandazes* were no match for the dacoits. The unhappy frontier district of Midnapore was subject to repeated Maratha raids between 1788 and 1799. These raiders, we learn, found a ready ally in the Raja of Mayurbhanj and the Chuars, the latter being a perpetual threat to the peace and security of the district. The Bankura records, going back to the early days of the 19th century, refer to a similar alliance between the Chuars, other criminal tribes and the Bishnupur Raja and to the repeated expeditions necessitated by their lawless activities. In 1846, even the Jagirdars acting as police were found to be in league with the dacoits. In one of these letters were found detailed statistics of the crimes committed in the lower provinces of Bengal during 1818-1819.

Besides the problems of peace and security, is to be noted the work of administrative organisation and settlement which was in progress during the latter half of the 18th and the earlier half of the 19th century. One letter in the 24-Parganas Collectorate refers to the measurement and the preparation of a detailed statistical account of the district. Another found in Midnapore supply similar information in reply to a questionnaire from the Board of Revenue in 1800. The establishment of the office of Qanungo is discussed in one letter dated 1818.

Continuation of various elements of the older system of government is also indicated by some of these documents. In 1795 the Registrar, *Sadr Nizamat Adalat* is found prescribing flogging and making of public roads, on the ground that these were punishments sanctioned by Islamic law. In 1796, the *Qazi-ul-Quzzat* is found still functioning. In 1794, we are told, there were 400 *Patwaris* or village accountants in Birbhum. The changes which were coming over older institutions are also reflected in some of the documents. It was ordained, for instance, in 1796, that the Ghatwals were to be henceforth "considered in the light of dependent talukdars".

The problems of revenue administration, particularly in the early days of the post-permanent settlement period, feature prominently in quite a number of these records. Burdwan in this respect appear to have been a sort of plague-spot. In 1788, the family of Raja Chaitan Singh of Bishnupur was put into prison for non-payment of revenue. In Midnapore in 1799, the Raja of Kasijora organised a furtive no-rent campaign. The following year saw extensive sales of lands for default of revenue in the same district. High assessment and fraudulent practices are described as being the chief causes for this state of affairs.

Some of these letters throw light on the interest taken by the Company in the secondary functions of state. A letter from the Committee for considering means of improving the town of Calcutta, dated 1804, recommended the building of wide roads and the stationing of fire-engines in each quarter. Some records in the Bankura Collectorate tell us of the government's share in the maintenance of *sarais* and ferries. In a letter, dated 1783, we read of a Committee of Grain set up to regulate the sale, distribution and price of corn at a time when a famine was raging in the Upper Provinces beyond the Company's domains.

Many interesting items of information regarding the judicial and excise departments are also scattered through the letters labelled 'Judicial Correspondence' and 'Excise Correspondence' respectively. A circular of the *Sadr Nizamat*, dated 1814 discourages the practice of taking evidence through agents, which, apparently, was then very much in favour with the trying magistrates in the districts. Another circular, dated 1841, prohibits the practice of inscribing the names of heathen deities on top of official communications though any interference with similar practices in case of petitions etc. from private parties is strictly forbidden. The Government's income from excise duties in the early part of the 19th century alongside the expenses incurred for the maintenance of 'Abkari establishments' is given in some of these records. A letter, dated 1857, mentions the prohibition of import of sulphur by sea and authorises the seizure of such stuff on payment of proper price.

Besides such detailed information a clear picture of the general character of the administration during the period is presented even by the comparatively few records we studied. Many of the apparently useless letters, containing mere routine matters and endless official admonitions for the dilatory ways of the district staff, are important from this point of view. For they constitute the most objective evidence of the slow working of the official machinery and of the growing menace of red-tape.

## THE MUKHBIR-I-SADIQ OF LUCKNOW

(By K. SAJANLAL\*)

Last year, I contributed to the *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission* a paper on the *Karnamah* of Lucknow. In this article I propose to describe its local contemporary the *Mukhbir-i-Sadiq*.<sup>1</sup> The following account is based on a study of the issues of this paper, dated 5th April 1872 to 24th December 1872.<sup>2</sup>

The *Mukhbir-i-Sadiq* was a weekly journal published by Mr. Salamat Ali from Mohalla Golagunj, Lucknow. The contents of its issues throw a flood of light on the activities of its contemporary newspapers and provide valuable information on the educational, social and economic condition of the people during the seventies of the last century. In this article we will give special attention to the references to press and education and will cursorily touch upon the social and economic aspects, though materials on these subjects are also available in abundance in the issues of this journal. The *Mukhbir-i-Sadiq* was always a champion of freedom of the press, and its columns were open to all irrespective of colour or creed. It evinced great interest in the uplift of the people in general and Muslims in particular; and it gave wide publicity to the appeals of Sayyad Ahmad Khan for the establishment of *Madraset-ul-ulum*. We also come across reports about the working of a *Madrasa-i-Imamia*, Canning College, Norman College, and of colleges and schools in Bombay and Baroda.

This paper drew upon a wide range of sources, e.g., *Oudh Akhbar*, *Shams-ul-Akhbar*, *Karnamah*, *Nur-ul-Anwar*, *Koh-i-nur*, *Tahzeeb-ul-Akhlaq*, *The Lawrence Gazette*, *Jalva-i-tur*, *Akhbar-i-Alam*, *Kasim-ul-Akhbar*, *Patiala Akhbar*, *Dabdaba-i-Sikandari*, *Kashf-ul-Akhbar*, *Akhbar-i-Sharishta-i-Taleem*, *Roznamcha*, *Shola-i-tur*, *The Benares Gazette*, *Akhbar-ul-Akhbar*, *Manshur-i-Muhammadi*, *The Mayo Gazette*, *The Akhbar-i-Scientific Society*, *Jam-i-Jamshid*, *The Hindu Patriot*, *Omdat-ul-Akhbar*, *Lauh-i-Mohfuz*, *Mufferah-ul-Qulab*, *The*

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<sup>1</sup> For its description read my paper published in the *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Madras Session, Page 486.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Rahatullah, Curator of the State Library for providing me facilities to take exhaustive notes from the copies of the paper belonging to the State Library. Some of its issues are missing. In all there are 610 pages.

with the ... The Indian papers made a point to be united and tried ... to win the case. A number of such instances could be cited, but we would give a brief resume of two such cases.

Babu Govind Raghunath Rao Tethi, the editor of *The Benares Gazette*, published in the issue of 30th May 1872 a report of an incident to the effect that the police extracted a confession from an accused in a theft case after bribing him heavily and thereafter they gave him a severe beating. The editor was prosecuted and the Magistrate of Benares found the editor guilty. He was fined Rs. 1,000 or in default to undergo six months imprisonment. The poor editor after serving 19 days imprisonment was set at liberty through intercession of Sir Jung Bahadur. The Lieut. Governor, Sir William Muir on being apprized of this case remitted the fine and issued a warning to the magistrate and ordered that local officers should not take action against the press without his sanction. This incident created a feeling of bitterness between the press and the local authorities. The journalists were jubilant when the editor was set free and his fine was remitted. They hailed the Lieut. Governor as the guardian angel of the press.

Another case was that of Padre Rajab Ali, missionary of Bara Banki and Secretary of District Conference, Oudh *versus* Munshi Hanuman Parshad, Deputy Inspector of Schools which came up for hearing before Mr. Nicholson, Asst. Commissioner. The Deputy Inspector of Schools filed a suit of libel against Rajab Ali, claiming Rs. 400 as damages from him. He alleged that the missionary had made defamatory remarks against him in his article entitled "What is the aim and object of the Government in establishing Schools?"<sup>(1)</sup> The plaintiff objected to a particular passage casting aspersions on his character. The reports of the examination of witnesses were given in details in the issues of the *Mukhbir-i-Sadiq*. Munshi Gokul Parshad, Babu Raghunath Rao Sahai, Pandit Mohanlal, Aminullah Khan, Babu Tarloknath, Moulvi Sayyad Muhammad Husin, Moulvi Chirag Ali, Munshi Vilayat Hussain were summoned to give evidence in this case.

When the Prince of Wales recovered from his illness, Babu Kesab Chandra Sen sent a message of congratulations to the Queen and it created some controversy. *The Public Opinion* made disparaging remarks in its columns about Babu Kesab Chandra Sen's action in doing so. The *Mukhbir-i-Sadiq* took this paper to task by saying that Kesab Chandra sen was an illustrious son of Bengal and was perfectly justified in sending a congratulatory message to the Queen.

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<sup>1</sup>Vide *Shams-ul-Akhbar*, dated 19th April 1872, Vol. IV, No. 2.

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The paper published a detailed account of the work of Sayyad Ahmad Khan. His speeches at Benares, the scheme for the establishment of *Madrasat-ul-ulum*, subscriptions and donations collected for this purpose and selection of the site, and other such matters were given full publicity. The controversy as to the selection of the site of *Madrasat-ul-ulum* raged for some time. The text of Northbrook's letter regarding his donation of Rs. 10,000 was also published. It was at this time that the announcement of a donation of one and a half lac of rupees by Khawja Abdul Ghani for the installation of water pipes brought forth a severe attack from the editor who sarcastically remarked "what! for pipes a lakh and half, and for *Madrasat-ul-ulum* only Rs. 1,000". The *Public Opinion* on the other hand under the caption "Charity for the Public Good", appreciated warmly the non-sectarian spirit of the donor.

The establishment of *Madrasa-i-Imamia* and its slow progress were given full publicity. At the first meeting donations of Rs. 5 per month from each of the *taluqdars* of Oudh were announced. This brought scathing criticism from the pen of the editor who wrote that the petty donations from the high placed dignitaries of Oudh should make one sick and ashamed. In its columns one finds a detailed account of the work of the Madrasa, its teachers, expenses, examinations and prize distribution ceremony etc. The reports of the work of Canning College, its prize distribution etc. are also to be found in the *Mukhbir-i-Sadiq*.

In its issue of 26th July we find the names of Indian students prosecuting their studies in England along with their subjects and the colleges to which they were attached. There were 18 such students from Bengal and 20 from other parts of the country.

From the account appearing in the *Omdat-ul-Akhbar* of Bhopal, the *Mukhbir-i-Sadiq* published numbers of deaths due to cholera as follows:—

Jaunpur	...	3,408
Allahabad	...	1,725
Basti	...	4,106
Mirzapur	...	3,907
Benares	...	344
Azamgarh	...	1,050
Gorakhpur	...	1,118
Kanpur	...	1,003

The statistics of mortality in the Punjab for the month of January were reported to be 46,179 deaths out of a total population of 9,506,449 and in the words of the editor the death rate was 48 per thousand.

We are also supplied with details about the number of Europeans and Indian Christians carrying on their missionary work. There were 7,480 priests, 727 churches, while the number of students studying in missionary schools was 137,000 out of 270,000 followers of Christianity.

There are also to be found some appreciative references to the work of the Delhi Society. Lachhmandass was requested by the Society to translate the Rigveda in Urdu. The translation was to be revised by Pandit Bisheshwar Nath and to be published by the Zakaullah Press. It was to be priced at Re. 1 per copy. The encouragement afforded to the study of oriental languages by the government was given good publicity. From 1st April 1871 to the end of March 1872, the award of various prizes were announced. In all Rs. 4,200 were disbursed as awards to 25 writers and translators, lists of whose names together with the titles of the books and the amounts of awards were published.

Even as early as 1872 the Indian press favoured prohibition. The Bangalore excise contract was given for rupees eight lacs per year. The editor of this journal criticised the excise policy of the Government which according to him instead of stopping the drink evil actively encouraged it.

Another news item gives us the information that the Maharaja of Kashmir and Jammu, in recognition of the expert knowledge of Babu Dev Shastri of Benares in foretelling accurately the solar eclipse, awarded him Rs. 2,000 and a *khillat*.

The visit of the King of Siam, and Lord Mayo's visit to Port Blair and his assassination by Sher Ali were reported in a number of its issues. A three page note appeared on Sher Ali from the pen of the correspondent of *The Friend of India*<sup>(1)</sup>. Reports regarding condolence meetings and resolutions passed on the death of Lord Mayo are also to be found in its columns.

Advertisement, announcing the publications of new newspapers such as the *Akhbar-ul-Akhiar* of Lucknow, the *Tilasam-i-Kirtan* of Bangalore, *The Patrika* and others appeared in its issue of 13th December, 1772. There was also published jokes and snippets some of which became so popular as to be published in almost all the contemporary newspapers.

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<sup>(1)</sup> The facts of the assassination of Lord Mayo were reported in details so much so that at times it tallies with James Grant's note *Vide Cassells' History of India*, pp. 412-413.

A NISHAN OF MUHAMMAD AKBAR HEIR-APPARENT OF SHAH  
ALAM BAHADUR BADSHAH GHAZI

(By A. H. Nizami\*)

*Translation*

Heir-apparent Muhammad Akbar son of Shah Alam Bahadur  
Badshah Ghazi 1170.

(Seal)

The sublime and gracious firman is hereby  
issued from the Royal Court out of bounty and  
munificene (to the effect)

that the village of Akari ? in the sarkar of Kora of the Allahabad  
subah is, as per endorsement, granted by us as an altamgha gift to  
supplicating Sarab Sukh, bearer of the sacred thread (Brahmin) and  
his sons and dependents, by way of an offering for the safety of the  
auspicious head of His Majesty possessing the power of fate and the  
rank of Solomon, and of ourselves, with effect from the autumn har-  
vest of the year 1167 Fasli. The chaudhuris, qanungoes, muqaddams  
and cultivators of that mahal as well as the present and the future  
officers of that place, deeming the above-mentioned village fixed as  
an altamgha gift in favour of the said grantee and his sons, should  
give him full possession thereof, and regarding the peshkash of  
faujdari etc., such as jarimanah, zabitanah (i.e. allowances paid to  
measurers and assessors) and all civil taxes and imperial dues, as  
remitted and written off, they should not demand a new sanad every  
year or cause inconvenience and obstruction on the score of any of  
these levies, so that, spending the proceeds of the aforesaid assets  
on their necessities, they (the grantee and his children) may, from  
father to son and generation to generation, constantly busy them-  
selves in praying for the life and prosperity of the empire of His  
Majesty, the Shadow of God, and of ourselves. Compliance with  
these orders is strictly enjoined. Written on the nineteenth of the  
solar month of Muharram in the 6th year of royal accession.

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\*An Ordinary and Associate member of the Indian Historical Records Com-  
mission representing the Vindhya Pradesh Government, Mr. A. H. Nizami,  
is also the Honorary Secretary of the Vindhya Historical Records Commission.

## REVERSE

Endorsement is being written Endorsement:—Supplicating Sarab Sukh, bearer of the sacred thread, is occupied night and day in praying for the increase of the life and prosperity of the eternal empire and there is no source whatever of livelihood for (his) dependents. Prays that village Akari ? may be granted, to him and his sons, as an altamgha gift by way of an offering for the safety of the auspicious head and that royal signature may be affixed in order to enable His Majesty's mutasaddis to prepare and hand over the altamgha firman so that, making (it) the source of his livelihood, (he) may persist in prayers for the everlasting life, prosperity and fortune of His Imperial Majesty. Intention of the sacred signature to the effect that the mutasaddis may hand over the sanad.

Copy received in the office of His Majesty on the nineteenth Muharram, year 6. H.

Sealed on the nineteenth Muharram, year 6.

F

## AKARI V.

As a result of a preliminary survey of records in Rewa Town this *Nishan* of Prince Muhammad Akbar, heir-apparent of Emperor Shah Alam, was brought to the notice of the Baghelkhand (now Vindhya) Historical Records Commission (*vide* Administration Report for 1947-48). The document is in the possession of Pt. Raghubir Sharan, son of late Pt. Balmik Prasad, Rajavaidya of His Highness Bandhavesh Maharaja of Rewa whose ancestor, Sarab Sukh, is the original grantee. The grant was made in the 6th year of accession of Shah Alam, *i.e.*, 1765 A.D. on the 19th Muharram, bears a *tughra* seal of the heir-apparent, dated 1170, and is written in good *nastaliq* hand with the usual *zamn* on the reverse. A contact print of the document has been acquired by the Commission.

Prince Ali Gauhar (Shah Alam) the eldest son of Emperor Alamgir II, having escaped from Delhi into the Doab in May 1758, thanks to the jealousy of his father's domineering *Wazir*. 'Imad-ul-Mulk, embarked on his thirteen years of wanderings. He married a Sayyid girl, named Mubarak Mahal at Miranpur and proceeded through the country of Shuja-ud-daulah, the hereditary enemy of 'Imad, to Allahabad on the invitation of the imperial governor of the place who offered him support in the conquest of Bihar. From here he led his first invasion of Bihar in 1759. As the siege of Patna ended in total failure Bihar had to be evacuated and the baffled prince arrived near Mirzapur. Maharaja Ajit Sinha of Rewa invited

him and sent his *Diwan*, Lal Chain Sinha, to escort the Prince, received him at Mangawan (on the Great Deccan Road) eighteen miles from the capital. Shah Alam reached Amahiya<sup>1</sup> outside the city on 20th July 1759 and halted here for the rainy season. After the rains Shah Alam left Rewa, leaving his pregnant Begum, whom he had recently married, to the care of the Maharaja. By way of Mirzapur and Sasaram he marched to Ghotauli where he received the news of his father's murder at Delhi and on the 24th December proclaimed himself Emperor. He then busied himself in preparations for his second invasion of Bihar in 1760.

According to tradition Maharaja Ajit Sinha lodged the Begum at Mukundpur, ten miles south of Rewa, in a house which still exists in a dilapidated condition. A son was born to the lady here on 7th *Ramzan* 1173 H<sup>1</sup>. (1759) and was named Muhammad Akbar. The 'chhathi' of the prince is still pointed out in a small room which is yet intact in the building and deserves the attention of the Department of Archæology. The Maharaja assigned the income of the village of Mukundpur for the expenses of the baby prince and his mother. When Shah Alam returned from his third invasion of Bihar (1761) he sent for the mother and baby and Ajit Sinha personally escorted them to Allahabad. Meanwhile the battle of Panipat had been fought, Delhi had been cleared of the Marathas and the Durrani conqueror had set out on his return journey after nominating Shah Alam as Emperor and writing to him to come and occupy Delhi. So, the Emperor started from Patna fort (12th April) at the invitation of Shuja-ud-daulah who undertook to escort him to his capital. Shah Alam invited Ajit Sinha to go to Delhi with him. The party started up the river Ganga till they reached Jajmau near Kanpur on 23rd July, where the Emperor went into cantonments for the rainy season. Ajit Sinha took leave of Shah Alam there and the latter granted him the *ilaga* of Chaukhandi, revenue free. Ajit Sinha returned to Rewa but failed to get possession of Chaukhandi. When the English East India Company took over the district of Allahabad the Rewa Durbar claimed possession of Chaukhandi but the claim was dismissed on the plea that the grant belonged to the period when the Emperor himself was in exile<sup>(1)</sup>.

From Jajmau Shah Alam, entirely moved by the leading strings of Shuja-ud-daulah, started on 7th November 1761 for the recovery of his dominions in Bundelkhand. In 1763 the Emperor negotiated with the Rohillas for his installation at Delhi by a united Muslim force but the plan broke down. In 1764 Shah Alam accompanied

<sup>1</sup> Tawarikh-e-Baghelkhand (Urdu) by Khan Bahadur Maulvi Rahman Ali Khan (Unpublished).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Shuja to Buxar in order to assist Mir Qasim Ali Khan to recover Bengal. The Nawab Wazir's crushing defeat at Buxar led to the complete prostration of Oudh at the feet of the English. The derelict Emperor, who had been insulted by Shuja before the battle of Buxar and abandoned after it, took shelter with the English and was honourably lodged by them in Allahabad fort, which they took in his name on 11 February, (1765). By the Treaty of Allahabad, dated 16th August, the English took the districts of Kora and Allahabad from Shuja-ud-daulah and gave them to the Emperor for his maintenance with an estimated revenue of 28 lakhs a year. An English force was posted at Allahabad for the protection of the Emperor. The result was that the Emperor became an English pensioner and now began for Shah Alam a long period of settled life. (1765-71) at Allahabad. He was a sovereign without a capital or any ruling authority, but he was saved from starvation and guarded from attack, thanks to the English. During this uneventful period in his life it was impossible for him to cease hankering for a return to Delhi, as a visible symbol of his full sovereignty. The English had promised, as early as 1761, to escort him to Delhi, the promise had been repeated year after year but it was never fulfilled. At last Shah Alam made an agreement with the Marathas in 1771 to get their help for returning to Delhi and left the civilized comforts and regular income so long enjoyed by his family and entourage at Allahabad for the privations, danger and poverty of Delhi which he entered in 1772. In 1788 Shah Alam was blinded by Ghulam Qadir Rohilla and in 1803 was formally taken under the protection of the Company who settled on him a pension of Rupees one lac per year. He lived to a ripe old age and died in 1806.

The Maharaja of Rewa, it seems, continued to send to the Emperor the income of the Mukundpur village for some years. According to Rewa State records Maharaja Jaya Sinha (1809-33) put on a *khillat* received from the Emperor (now Muhammad Akbar Shah 1806-37) on the occasion of his *Rajyabhisheka*. There is some correspondence among the Moti Mahal Papers, preserved in the archives of Vindhya Pradesh at Rewa, which shows that the last Emperor, Bahadur Shah (1837-58), sought the help of the Governor General of India for the resumption of the remittance of the Mukundpur income which had been stopped and which he claimed as a *tiyul-i-shahi*. As the Governor General interceded on his behalf, Maharaja Raghuraj Sinha (1854-80) offered to resume the remittance of the amount to the Emperor and there is evidence to show that the money was sent to the Delhi for some years till the outbreak of the Mutiny of 1857 stopped it for good.

These facts, for which I am indebted to local sources, traditional as well as documentary, besides Vol. II of Sarkar's *Fall of the Mughal*

*Empire* which has been freely drawn upon, are relevant to our study of the document under examination. According to the descendants of Sarab Sukh who have the *Nishan* in their possession, Jageshwar Ram who came to Rewa with the help of his relative, Tiwari Sobhachand, presumably during the reign of Maharaja Ajit Sinha (1755-1809), had two sons one of whom was Sarab Sukh, the grantee in the present *Nishan*. The Tiwaris are the earliest settlers among the Gaur Brahmins of Rewa, and their profession has been that of Rajavaidyas. Jageshwar Ram was a Vyās and the earliest grant in the possession of his descendants is dated Samvat 1863, (1809 A. D.) Presumably the Vyāsas in 1765 were still have-nots among their Gaur compatriots. It is very likely that young Sarab Sukh, son of Jageshwar Ram, attended to the royal mother and baby, during their stay under the Maharaja's protection, as a protegee of the Tiwari Rajvaidya, who may have deputed him to officiate for him, off and on, during the period of delivery and confinement. Any material reward could hardly be expected from the royal family in this period of adversity when they themselves were dependent on services volunteered by hosts like the vassal Maharaja and when Shah Alam himself was away from their place of refuge. In the 6th year of accession, when the heir-apparent had attained the age of seven, Providence brought Shah Alam to live at Allahabad with two districts allowed by the English for his maintenance. It was a good opportunity for the Brahmin aspirant, Sarab Sukh, to approach the royal presence with petition in his hand and blessings in his tongue. His prayers met with imperial approval. To the young heir-apparent, namesake of Akbar the Great, who differed from his illustrious ancestor in all but the circumstances of his birth, the issue of the *Nishan* must have been a pleasant task, one thing is significant that while 1170, the date of the seal, taken as the *fasli* year, corresponds to 1762 A.D. and the date of the issue of the *Nishan* is 6th year of imperial accession-1765 A.D. the grant is to take retrospective effect from the year 1167 *fasli*-1759, the year of the prince's birth at Mukundpur. The grantee is thus sought to be compensated for the period of 6 years that had elapsed since the auspicious occasion of the gift arose.

The sojourn of Shah Alam in Allahabad was so well begun for Sarab Sukh but the pleasure turned out to be ephemeral. The prospects which looked so promising, were blighted when the authorities of the Company refused to honour the grant of the imperial exile as they did in the case of a similar grant in favour of Maharaja Ajit Sinha. Thus the debt of gratitude which the imperial family owed to the Raja and his Rajavaidya alike remained unpaid. Sarab Sukh's possession of village Akari in *sarkar* Korah (now Fatehpur district) was only nominal or short-lived. The tradition in

the family is that the possession was never obtained at all. Nevertheless the document has been preserved with meticulous care as a token of imperial gratitude for services rendered during adversity.



# PARWANA RELATING TO THE SANAD OF SARDESHMUKHI GIVEN TO SHAHU CHHATRAPATI

(By B. W. Bhat)

At the meeting of the Indian Historical Records Commission held at Baroda in December 1940, Dr. A. G. Pawar discussed some original documents relating to *Chauthai*, *Sardeshmukhi* and *Swaraj* Sanads given to Shahu Chhatrapati by the Mughal Emperors. Four English extracts from the translations of important portions of these documents made by Captain Grant Duff, historian of the Marathas, kept in the British Museum, one letter of Balaji Vishwanath Peshwa and Yadi of Shankaraji Malhar were brought to light by Dr. Pawar and his paper contained a discussion relating to these Sanads. As the original sanads are still not available and there are very few chances of discovery of these documents hereafter, any new document relating to these Sanads will prove valuable and useful for judging the authenticity of important terms and conditions of the grant of these Sanads.

In this paper I propose to notice a new document, a Parwana relating to the *Sardeshmukhi* Sanad, which so far no historical researcher has mentioned. This Parwana is in Persian and I have given its free translation and have discussed some important points connected with it in this paper.

Before giving a translation of this document it is necessary to describe the procedure which seems to have been observed by the Mughal Emperors with regard to the grant of Sanads or Farmans issued by them. Whenever any grant of village lands or other property was made by the Mughal Emperor to any person a Sanad or Farman regarding the same was prepared by an officer of the Imperial Court. Along with the preparation of this grant additional copies of the same were prepared. Out of these one seems to have been kept with the Imperial records; one was given to the grantee, and the rest of the copies sent to the Deshmukh and Deshpande Watandars of the Paragana in which the property given in grant was situated. In case any such original Sanad is not found its counterpart prepared according the above procedure is as reliable as the original for knowing its contents. In addition to this a Parwana relating to the said Sanad or Farman was sent to the Deshmukh and

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Deshpande Watandars of the Paragana in which the property given in grant was situated for their information and for being kept in their record.

The Sanad of *Sardeshmukhi* granted to Shahu related to the revenues of the six Subahs of the Deccan, consequently the counterparts of the original Sanad of *Sardeshmukhi* as well as all other documents relating to the same were forwarded to the several Watandars of the Paraganas in the six Subahs of the Deccan including Khandesh. Nandurbar Paragana formed part of the Khandesh Subah. It was for this reason that all documents relating to the *Swaraj* Sanad were sent by Mughal Court to the Watandar Desai family of Nandurbar Paragana. The present holder of the Desai Watan of this Paragana has in his possession old documents of the Mughal Emperors. According to the procedure as stated above a Parawana relating to this Sanad was in due course sent to the Desai Watandar just at the time when the Sanad of *Sardeshmukhi* was given to Shahu Chhatrapati. The head of the Watandar family to whom this Parwana was sent prepared a copy of this Parwana and kept the same in his record for his use. It is this copy upon which this paper is based.

The free translation of this document is as follows:—

Nawab Amerool Umra Bahadur Feroj Jung Sipah Sardar

### Copy

The Parwana bearing the seal of Kazi Muhammad Shafi dated 19 Rabiul-Awwal San 7 is to the following effect: In accordance with the order of the Badashaha (Emperor) and in accordance with the order of Bakshi Mulak and in accordance with the order of (Nabab Amerool Umra Bahadur Feroj Jung Sipah Sardar) the *Sardeshmukhi* of the six Subahs of the Deccan with effect from the spring harvest of the current year in return for a *peshkash* amounting to Rs. 1,17,19,390 and 12 annas has been given under a Kaul (agreement) to Raja Shahu Chhatrapati. As soon as the order of Badashaha is received one fourth amount of this should be paid in the Government treasury, and the remaining amount should be paid by instalments. Raja Shahu has been given as Rusum Rs. 10 out of every hundred rupees. He should enjoy this privilege. He should take care to increase the population and to guard the interest of Government, he should also destroy those who oppress the subjects. If the property of anybody is looted the same should be given to him and he should punish thieves. He should also maintain an efficient army and should diligently perform his duties. He should see that the Government dues are paid in the treasury according to instalments and he should never wish to take anything more

from any one than the fixed amount payable to Government. Be it known to all the Deshmukhs, Deshpandes, Mukaddams owners of lands, citizens etc. that the rights of *Sardeshmukhi* are given to Raja Shahu Chhatrapati.

Order of Amerool Umra Feroj Jang Bahadur Sipah Sardar to the effect that one fourth of the sum of rupees one crore seventeen lacks, nineteen thousand, three hundred ninety and annas twelve, and the rest of the amount should be paid by instalments (by Shahu) and that 10 per cent of this should be given to Raja Shahu as Rusum from the Rabbi season. And a Kararnama relating to this should be taken from Raja Shahu Chhatrapati:—

The Wakil of Raja Shahu agrees and executes Kararnama dated 16th Rabiul awwal 7th Julus as follows:—

For many days in the Deccan area oppression is taking place and the country has become desolate therefore the Sanad of *Sardeshmukhi* of the six provinces of the Deccan granting 10 per cent of the amount as Rusum has been given. If such a Sanad is granted by the Emperor to Raja Shahu peace will be established in the country, lands in villages will be brought under cultivation, thieves and oppressors will be suppressed and the subjects will become happy. Raja Shahu Chhatrapati agrees to do all this. Peace in the country should be so established that travellers, merchants and others should feel confident when travelling through the country. If the goods of any such person are looted the same would be restored to him. Thieves would be punished. The responsibility of recovering Government revenue will be of Shahu Chhatrapati. Efficient army would be maintained and diligence would be observed in rendering of service to the Emperor. The revenue of the country has deteriorated and therefore nothing more than what is due would be recovered. Government revenue would be collected according to Government rules. And therefore it is provided that the sum of Rupees 1,17,19,390 and annas 12 would be paid in the treasury. (A Kararnama about the acceptance of the *Sardeshmukhi* is executed on behalf of Shahu Chhatrapati). Immediately on the receipt of the order one fourth of the amount would be paid in the treasury and the remaining  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the amount would be paid by instalments. A Sanad for this should it is prayed be given. The portion of the amount ( $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total revenue) would be credited in the (revenue) accounts of the six subahs

Subah Khujasta Buniad

One crore, Seventeen lacks, nineteen thousand three hundred ninety and annas twelve.

Subah Varhad one crore fifteen lacks, twenty three thousand five hundred and eight.

The total revenues of the Subahs 18 crores 5 lacks 18 thousand two hundred and ninety four rupees and 5 annas.

In Dr. Pawar's paper published in the Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission (in 1940) the names of the six subahs of the Deccan are given along with the total revenue of each Subah.

The figure of the total amount of the six subahs of the Deccan is also given.

In the copy of the Parwana under consideration the names of the two Suahs viz. Khujasta Buniad (Bijapur) and Varhad are given as also the figures of the revenues of these Subahs. The figures of the total revenue of Varhad or Berar exactly tally with each other in both the copy of the Parwana and the figure given in Dr. Pawar's paper. The figure of total revenue of Khujasta Buniad i.e. Bijapur does not tally with the figure of the total revenue of the Bijapur province as given in Dr. Pawar's paper. The grand total of the revenues of the six provinces of the Deccan is given in the copy of the Parwana as 18,05,18,294 and 5 annas. This figure as given in Dr. Pawar's paper is Rs. 18,05,17,294 and 5 $\frac{3}{4}$  annas. It seems that the person in the service of the Nandurbar Desai who copied the Parwana failed to copy the names of the four Subahs which are not to be found in the copy along with the figures of the total revenues of these subahs, owing to his not being able to make out the names of these subahs. There is a mistake of one thousand rupees in the figure of the grand total of the revenues of the six provinces. This seems to be due to oversight of the copyist. The names of the six subahs along with their total revenues and the figure of the grand total of revenues of the six subahs are given by Dr. Pawar in a foot note and not in the main body of the paper. In the foot note the reference given is Br. Mu. 26,606. It may be that in the original document reference of which has been made in Dr. Pawar's paper the writer may have committed mistakes in giving the figures of the total revenue.

## CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHY OF A FIFTEENTH CENTURY SUFİ SAINT OF BIHAR.

[By Syed Hasan Askari]\*

In 1811-12 Francis Buchanan found in the "Division of Daudnagar" in the Gaya Dt. "at least 500 Pirzadas who were mostly descended from Mahbub Subhani (Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani), a saint buried at Baghdad" (in 571-1175). "One of the eleven sons" of this celebrated founder of the Qadri order of Sufis, "Abdul Keza" (Razzaq) was the direct ancestor of "Muhammad Qadri", "who", we are told by Buchanan, "came here and destroyed the infidels and was buried at Amja (Amjhar) where his descendants have 3 whole manors". Amjhar, a village 10 miles to the north east of Daudnagar, and some 25 miles from Palmarganj Station of E.I. Railway in Gaya District, is still the seat of a Khanqah—founded by Syed Muhammad Qadri in the middle of the 15th century A.D. and its "Chief Pirzada" and "Gaddinashin" in the time of Buchanan was Shah Manzelat Ali<sup>1</sup> who probably represented the line of one of the three sons of the saint. The descendants of the saint had already in the time of Buchanan branched out into many families and are now found spread over the Districts of Gaya, Patna, and Shahabad.<sup>2</sup> They are said to have been in possession of valuable manuscripts and records, but only one of them Moulvi Syed Ahmad, Uruj Qadri, representing the line of Sulaiman Qadri,<sup>3</sup> a grandson of the saint and the first of a long line of Qazis and Naib Qazis<sup>4</sup> since the time of Akbar down to that of the East India Company could be persuaded to show a few

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<sup>1</sup> This name does not occur in *Bisala-i-Jawadia* a persian ms. containing genealogical tables with some incidental notices (kindly lent to the writer by Hakim Shuaib Saheb of Phulwari). Probably the author wrote it before Buchanan.

<sup>2</sup> A *Farman* of Alamgir I, dated 2nd Zihijja, 14th year of Julus, made a *mokarri* grant, by way of *Madad Maash*, in village Muhammadnagar *alias* Jogia with *Dakhli* of Rasulpur in Parganah Danwar of Sarkar-i-Shahabad to the sons, dependents, adherents, fakirs and wayfarers attached to Syed Abdur Rasul, a descendant of Mahbub Subhani. He was the son of Abdullah a grandson of the eldest son of the saint of Amjhar.

<sup>3</sup> See an interesting account of him in *Risala-i-Jawadia*. *Mahzarnama* with the stamp office seal of Calcutta, dated 1833 says that he was appointed by Akbar as Qazi of Parganas Ancha & Manorah in Aurangabad sub-division of Gaya district.

<sup>4</sup> The *Risala-i-Jawadia* document contains a list of the various personages of the family who held the offices of the Chief and Naib Qazis.

of the documents in his possession<sup>1</sup>. These include, besides a few *sanads* and *Firmans*, some granted to the family members, others submitted to them as exhibits, a valuable Persian manuscript of 51 folios, entitled *Manaqib-i-Muhammadi*, which contains an account of the founder of the Amjhar Khanqah and his sons and adherents, written by Ali Sher Shirazi, one of his chief companions, only six years after his death in 946 as is evident from a versified chronogram<sup>2</sup> found at the end of the manuscript. Shirazi refers to another biography of the saint in Arabic, *Tarikh-i-Husaini*, by Karimuddin Husain Makki, which, unfortunately, is no longer available. The same is the case with *Daqa'iq-ul-Haqaiq*<sup>3</sup>. *Tahzib-ul-Quran*<sup>4</sup> or *Hizbul Adiya* by the saint-founder of Amjhar and with *Fatawa-i-Masudi*<sup>5</sup> by Amir Masud Qadri, his grandson and a Qazi in Akbar's days. In spite of the many references to the miracle-working powers of the saint and things which cater to the needs of the credulous, there is much in Shirazi's work of cultural and historical interest.

This manuscript of ten chapters contains much information about the early<sup>6</sup> life and the activities of the saint outside India and about the various stages of his training and education, the courses of studies he followed, the institutions where, and the savants under whom, he studied, his habits, manners and customs, his physical<sup>7</sup> appearance, his dress,<sup>8</sup> his piety and zeal for Islam, his hobby for learning and acquiring proficiency in the languages<sup>9</sup> of other peoples and countries, and the men whom he met and who became devoted

<sup>1</sup> By virtue of the office of Qazi held by them they used to receive such documents and perhaps some of them could not be returned. Among them are (i) a *Farman* of Shahjahan, dated 1043 granting *Madad Maash* lands in Pargana Balia of Sarkar Bihar to Bibi Mah Koch, Md. Asim etc., (ii) Shah-jahan's *farman*, dated 29th year Julus or 1065 addressed to Raja Jaswant Singh regarding disputes about certain lands in Bihar with his brothers (iii & iv) Two *Sanads* issued on behalf of Md. Shah (30th Julus) and Alamgir II (6th yr.) appointing the recipients Qazi of pargana Shahjahanpur in Bihar.

<sup>2</sup> The relevant lines are "Girafatam Qalam Ra Bebestam Do Lab-Nawishtam Manaqib Ham Andar Seh Shah-Tu Az Harf-i-Fael Wa Harf-i-Zaman-Bekun Sale Tarikh Guftan Ayan". Three times of the numerical value of the word *shab* which is 906 plus that of *Mim* which is 40 representing *darfzaman* and *Harf-i-Fael* give the year.

<sup>3</sup> *Risala-i-Jawadia*. Of this 6 pages in the handwriting of the saint himself had been kept as a treasure by Chindas, Kanungo of Manauro.

<sup>4</sup> *Tazkirat-al-Mumajjad*.

<sup>5</sup> A member of the family is said to be still in possession of this rare work but he refuses to let any one consult it.

<sup>6</sup> Born at Baghdad in 816 A.H., he had completed his education and become an accomplished scholar when he was only 23 years old. After practising many austerities he began his missionary activities at the age of 27.

<sup>7</sup> Big-bodied with sinking belly, large forehead, thin expanded eyebrows, high nose, broad nostrils, long white beared with sprinkling of black hair at the time of death, broad chest, average-sized fingers, eyes and ears, and fair complexioned.

<sup>8</sup> 4th Chapter. Wore a *latia* cap sticking to the head; and white or green in colour, with a white turban, arranged in knots and circular in form, and a white 'pairahan' or long robe with shirts with a blanket (?) of black wool round the body.

<sup>9</sup> Chapter 6 on speech and language "During his travels wherever he went he lost no time in picking up the local dialects.....within the frontiers of India he was in position to speak to the Indian Mashailkhs (holy person-ages) in their own language with correct pronunciation".

to, or admirers of, him during the course of his journey from Iraq to India. Although these things are not devoid of interest for a student of history and culture, lack of time and space compels the writer to relate only a few facts connected with the life of the saint in India.

The first thing which strikes one's notice in the manuscript is the definite reference to the peaceful penetration of Islam and to Muslim settlements at such an early date in those parts of Gaya bordering on Chotanagpur, which as late as the time of Hunter "consisted of hills and jungles abounding with wild animals"<sup>1</sup>. The manuscript was completed in 3 nights at Kutumba, mentioned in the *Ain*, at the instance of a local resident, Hakim Munawwar, who had welcomed and become a devotee of the saint and has been described as "the Plato of the time and the Aristotle of the Age". The author had been deputed by the saint to carry on his work in the regions of Kutumba and, as we learn from another source<sup>2</sup> he lies buried there. Some other villages, inhabited by the Muslims, including Hasipur whose chief, Malik Qazim, was at first hostile to the saint and later relented and founded a village named Mahuli after the Mahua tree, and where the Khanquah of Shaikh Ahmad had been situated have been mentioned. Syed Sulaiman Mashhadi, a devotee and adherent of the saint of Amjhar died "a martyr for the sake of God" and his shrine lies Navnava in Pargana Ekil, situated in subdivision of Jahanabad, in Gaya.

It was for the sake of Islam that Syed Muhammad undertook the arduous journey to Hindustan. Touched by the tale of woe narrated by a refugee from the present Aurangabad sub-division namely "the pious and tall-statured, Shaikh Muhammad Ali, and also commanded in a dream", as the biographer would have us believe, Syed Darvesh, the father of Syed Muhammad, directed him to "attend to the complaint of, and secure justice for the Indian from his oppressor, try to bring the latter into the fold of the faith, and failing that pray for his overthrow and settle down in that land so that the people thereof might find the true path through his guidance". He was also instructed to marry in a family of good extraction preferably in that of Syed Ahmad Qadri who had already migrated to India. The saint traversed with his forty companions, the whole distance from Baghdad to Bihar, full of hills and dales, deserts and plains, on the back of horses and camels, within a period of 7 months and 11 days in 846 or 1442 A.D. During the journey he passed through Qandhar<sup>3</sup> and Multan,<sup>4</sup> and also stopped for a fortnight at Surharpur in U.P.

<sup>1</sup> Hunter, W. W., *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol. XII; p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Risala-i-Jawadia*.

<sup>3</sup> The ruler of Kandhar had already heard of the reputation of the saint from Syed Nasiruddin Tabrizi and he and Shaikh Mansoor, the most learned man there, gave him a fitting reception.

<sup>4</sup> He was introduced to the Sharif by 'Makhdoom Syed Agli Siraj-ul-Millat Waddin' one of whose three sons, Sulaiman Mashhadi, accompanied the saint in his journey to India.

where he married Bibi Piyanan (a significant Indian name). He arrived near the strong-hold of the tyrannical Kol chief named Jiwan.

Kols and Santhals, Mundas and Oraons, Cheroes and Kharias, of Chotanagpur are supposed to have been at one time the governing tribes in different parts of Bihar. According to traditions recorded by Buchanan, the territory of the Kol Rajas may have at one time extended from Baidyanath to Banaras and the English statistician noted that much of the country in South Bihar was "dotted here and there with rude forts which local tradition rightly attributed to the Kols or wild tribes of Central India". He found relics of the three great fortresses of the Kol chiefs in Kabar, Kutumba or Ramghar and Shahabad. Ali Sher Shirazi has also added something to our knowledge in this respect. We are told that the place where the saint arrived and which later came to be known as Narahna was a lowland near which a river (Raud) was flowing and it was infested with wild beasts and reptiles. Pointing to a fortified place which stood at the extremity Shaikh Muhammad Ali cried out "This is the fort of the tyrant who practised oppression on us and made my brothers; their wives and sons, martyrs because one of our relations had gone to the length of entering into discussion with him and had declared that the idols and idolworshippers were futile and false. At this the lord of the fortress destroyed all our relations. I, however, managed to survive the carnage and laid my grievances before every one but none cared to come to my help". The saint approached the tyrant "whose name was Jiwan and who belonged to the tribe called in India Kolhia". He said "Why did you kill the Musalmans? Do you not feel afraid of God the Great Avenger? It is better for you to tread the path of peace (Islam) otherwise you will have to face retribution". The Kolhia burst out in anger "What have you got to do with me? Be off". The saint returned to the wilderness of Narahana and prayed to God for punishment. It so happened that on account of a heavy downpour the walls of the fortress collapsed killing Jiwan and his family under the debris. The brother of Jiwan Kolhia named Karmoon Kolhia who had his stronghold at Dumra, one kos from there, began the search of the saint but finding no trace of him gave up the pursuit.

The saint continued to practise austerities in the wild and inaccessible regions where many a miraculous thing were seen. During his stay in the jungle a cowherd became a convert and he was "given religious lessons in Hindvi" and was named Sadiq. He used to supply milk to the saint and his followers. One day he saw two brothers, Haji Khan and Jami Khan, in a distressed condition and lamenting over their lot on the bank of the river. He elicited the



information from them that they were the employees of "Darya Khan,<sup>1</sup> the ruler (Wali) of Bihar" who had sent them to Sasaram to purchase a horse for him from a dealer there. The horse while being lead across the river got accidentally drowned. They felt mightily afraid of their lord and master, Darya Khan, who they said, was "a man of ferocious disposition". They were brought to the saint who taking pity on them successfully prayed to God for the restoration of the horse but he enjoined upon them not to disclose this affair to the Wali of Bihar lest the animal might be lost again. They could not, however, resist the temptation of doing so with the result that the horse ultimately died as had been foretold. But the ruler of Bihar on knowing the whole affair became so impressed with the saint's miraculous powers that he sent presents in cash and kind which were accepted. He ordered a mosque, a *Khanquah*, and a mansion (*koshak*) to be built at the place where the incident had taken place.

The fame of the saint spread far and wide, specially after so much attention had been bestowed on him by the powerful ruler of Bihar, and crowds of people began to come to him. He, therefore, directed his followers to leave the place for a more inaccessible wilderness. Sadiq felt astonished at this end and questioned him "O my lord? Why are you leaving such a furnished villa?" "As he was a Hindi (Indian) and was not so intelligent and sharpwitted as to understand the reality of things, His Holiness replied to him also in 'Hindvi' only this much. 'Na Mana Jiva Inha Na Rahna'" (my heart did not permit me to stay here). From that time that jungle along with the stream came to be named Narahna and all are now heard speaking of it as 'Narahana'.

After some months the saint came to, and settled down at, Amjhar. One day the Muezzin's call to prayer having reached the ears of Karmoon Kolhia, he enquired about it and was told that the saint "whose pursuit he had given up largely on account of the fear of Darya Khan, the ruler of Bihar, was likely to create such a situation as might eventually result in the loss of the wild tracts over which he exercised his sway". At this he sent a body of non-believers with orders to kill the saint and his followers but they were struck by lightning and were either destroyed or dispersed. He then sent his own son, Chattr, at whose orders stones were pelted at the saint while he was engaged in his prayers and his forehead was badly wounded. This provoked Shaikh Muhammad Majzub so much

<sup>1</sup>Darya Khan Luhani (Nuhani Khaskhael) of Bihar, a contemporary of Sultan Sikandar Lodi and his son and successor, who, besides his own province took possession of the whole country east of the Ganges and defeated in several engagements the troops sent against him by Sultan Ibrahim Lodi. He died not long before the death of the Sultan at Panipat. He was succeeded by his son, Bahar Khan, the patron of Farid Khan Sur (later Sher Shah) and to him the rebellious chiefs in Bihar transferred their allegiance proclaiming him king under the style of Muhammad Shah. According to the author of *Makhazan-i-Afghanian* Darya Khan had also proclaimed his independence and assumed the style of sovereignty such as the reading of the *Khutba* and issuing of coins in his own name.

that he managed to kill Chattr and buried him near the stream. His men who had already lost heart ran away. This brought Karmoon Kolhia himself on the scene. After some exchange of words between him and Shaikh Hassan when the Kol Chief raised his sword to kill the saint, as it was the will of God, he died with his own weapon.

All this, as also some other incidents such as the visit of the saint to Hashipur at the invitation of Shaikh Ahmad, the slights and insults shown at first and remorse and contrition eventually shown by Malik Qazin, occurred within a year of the arrival of the saint at Narhana for Shaikh Hassan who figured prominently in all these affairs was sent in '847 to Surharpur in U.P. to fetch the newly-wedded wife (Piyan) of the saint. But Shaikh Hassan died at Surharpur and was buried there. Bibi Piyan had to be escorted by the men of her brother, Syed Hussain. The saint observed on one occasion, "However much I wish to live in isolation and retirement so as to avoid the crowds I feel helpless before God who seems to have ordained otherwise". A disciple from Bengal, Shaikh Masud, sent a purse containing 100 gold pieces which were at once distributed among the followers to meet their expenses and provide clothes for them. Strange things continued to happen such as the miraculous escape from the watery grave of Usman Khan and Miyan Khan who were coming on boats from Shekhpura, and the suggestions received in a dream by a learned man of Biharsharif, named Bhikhan Bihari, to betake himself to the saint and to become a tutor to his two sons, Jalaluddin and Muinuddin, who were born respectively in the year 849 and 868 A.H.

The medieval age was an age of superstitions. People believed in all sorts of abnormal things and supernatural elements. There is nothing surprising, therefore, that we got accounts of such things in this manuscript. But shorn of all that is unbelievable, the analytical sketch given above contains some very valuable information about the zeal shown by the early Muslims for the propagation of their faith, in unknown lands infested with wild beasts, among semi-Hinduised local chiefs of aboriginal tribes like Kols who had thrown up fortifications and exercised sway over rough jungles and wild impenetrable tracts; the indifference displayed by the local Muslim rulers to individual cases of ill-treatment of their co-religionists; and the last but not the least, the effective method adopted by the adventurous Sufi preachers and missionaries to find an entrance into the hearts of the natives by learning their language<sup>1</sup> and communicating

<sup>1</sup>The contribution of Bihari saints towards the evolution of the mixed language of Urdu or Hindustani was by no means negligible even before the saint of Amjhar made India his home and the final resting place and cultivated the language of the indigenous population so as to make it a medium of inter-communication and exchange of thoughts and religious beliefs. We find the celebrated saint of Biharsharif, Makhdum Sharfuddin Yahaya Maneri using such expressions as "Bat Shali par Sankri-Des bhala per dur". This occurs in his *Malfuz*, *Maadan-ul-Maani* compiled by his well known companion, Sheikh Badra Zain Arabi in 747 A.H. or 1357 A.D.

their thoughts and beliefs through their spoken tongues. The word *Inha* in the Hindi utterance of the saint quoted above is particularly significant for in rural areas of Bihar it is still in use. The observation of the saint made in reply to the question put by his biographer regarding the superiority of the Indians as linguists forms an interesting reading. One may not agree with him when he says that Adam who knew all the languages was sent down from heaven to Ceylon (Sarandip) which is a part of India, and that the "Suhuf" (scripture) of Adam was also in the Hindvi language" and so on and so forth: but it is a fact admitted not only by him but by others also, notably by the celebrated Amir Khusru in his *Masnavi*, Nuhsepahr, that the "Hindian (Indians) are capable of learning any language they like and acquiring a command over it as if it was their mother tongue while the same is not the case with others who feel inclined to learn Hindvi". The references to and the names mentioned of the three Kol chiefs and the mention of Darya Khan Luhani, the ruler of Bihar have got their own significance.

The author of *Manaqib* enjoyed, like the saint of Amjhar, a fairly long life, having performed *Tawaf* of Kaaba eight times with him, accompanied him to India, and outlived him. He therefore tells us much not only about his spiritual guide but also about his sons and daughter and grandchildren and about the most intimate and pious disciples such as Shaikh Hasan 'Madani-ul-Quraishi', Shaikh Muhammad Majzeb, the silent, Syed Alauddin Tabrizi, Malik Tajuddin "commonly known as *khandasher*<sup>1</sup> for he was sharp tongued as sword", Syed Sulaiman Mashhadi, Syed Ali Manikpuri, Syed Shamsuddin Husaini, etc.

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<sup>1</sup>The presence of such Hindi words in the Ms. is significant. The author Ali Sher Shirazi, appears to have taken pains to learn the indigenous language. He once said to his spiritual guide: "Of all the languages the letters in the Indian lexicons are the largest in number and that is the reason why non-Indians cannot pronounce all their letters as well as they do. Their language appears to be the most difficult. However much we try, we are unable to reach the height of eloquence in it. What is the reason"?

of action, to one Anyaba who was probably residing at Wai. As this paper is a contemporary one and gives detailed information about the expedition, it is worthwhile to summarise it here. Its gist runs thus: "Here is the news of the court. Panta Pradhana appeared before Tasgaon earlier and lost one person of note on the day of the siege. Raghuji Bhosale arrived later and encamped on the plain at an arrows' throw distance from him (Panta Pradhana). Yesaji Shinde<sup>7</sup> met Rao Pradhana secretly and promised on solemn oath to hand over Tasgaon to him if His Majesty (Chhatrapati Shahu) would forgive him, favour him with an interview and include him among His Majesty's servants. The siege, therefore, is only a pretension as men on both the sides have begun to indulge themselves in recreation. His Majesty on hearing the news thought that he must not allow such a capitulation as he (Yesaji Shinde) instead of seeing His Majesty directly wished to see him through Panta Pradhana. His Majesty, therefore, would often advise Rao Pradhana to leave Tasgaon and capture Athani (Belgaum) by going thither and that His Majesty and Raghuji Bhosale would try to capture Tasgaon. Yesaji Shinde on his part entreated and argued with Rao Pradhana that he had waited and held the post till his arrival and had agreed to surrender it after his arrival and after a promise of better prospects for himself. He (Rao Pradhana) was thus in a fix. On the one hand there was his promise and on the other there was the obstinacy of His Majesty. He, therefore, began to correspond and was reluctant to leave the place. In the meanwhile a special messenger, Daryaji Naik came from His Majesty with express orders to pull down the tents of Raya (Panta Pradhana) and make him leave for Athani. Rao Pradhana, therefore, immediately despatched Mahadoba (Purandare) to His Majesty, who after much discussion prevailed upon His Majesty to proceed to Tasgaon. Narabava Mantri<sup>8</sup> had also come there. They held mutual consultations yesterday and decided that Tasgaon should be occupied by Panta Pradhana and Athani by Raghuji Bhosale and Rao Pratinidhi<sup>8(a)</sup> after proceeding thither. Tasgaon has practically fallen. The flag of Rao Pradhana would be unfurled as soon as he hoists it. Raghuji Bhosale is leaving today for Athani. We have sent our contingent fairly equipped. But when we met on last Sunday, Raghuji Bhosale, being ill-advised, was much displeased to find that it consisted neither of a hundred horse-men as promised nor included any tried-men and wellbred horses. He pays the daily allowance after every five or six days; he paid

<sup>7</sup> This person sided with Udaji Chavhan, a rebel who proved a nuisance to Chhatrapati Shahu for a long time and who had held Tasgaon on behalf of Udaji Chavhan against Shahu.

<sup>8</sup> A trusted counsellor of Chhatrapati Shahu.

<sup>8(a)</sup> Athani was actually captured by Pratinidhi on the 8th November 1738 A.D. (Itihasa Sangraha Information, gleaned from Sanads etc. of the Peshwa Daftar, item 39, page 29).

the last instalment four days back, but nothing since then. I have accosted Nurkhan, Shahaji Kadam, Konherpanta<sup>9</sup> and his honour himself; but have not succeeded in getting the daily allowance. We must make up the number by recruiting some more horsemen who can at least maintain the air of combatants. It will be very difficult to pull on if we do not get the daily allowance. (Here follows various private and obscure items). Panta Pradhana has asked Raghuji Bhosale not to recruit deserters from his camp for which reason he is rather displeased."

*Document No. 5* is addressed to one Anya by one of his younger relatives Bhau, who was encamping at Gaurwad (South Satara), is dated Saturday, the 8th of Rabi II and refers to the capture of Gumat<sup>10</sup> by Chhatrapati Shahu and Sambhaji of Kolhapur together. Probably on the basis of the *Bharatavarsha Chronology* (p. 8) and *Kavyetihasa-sangraha* collection of letters No. 9 (both later compilations) R. B. Sardesai has ascribed this incident to 1730 in his *Life of Bajirao I* (p. 159) and has dated the letter (SPD Vol. XI, No. 8) which refers to this incident 8 October 1730 A.D. But as before 1730 Shahu and Sambhaji never co-operated in their plans for conquests and as document No. 1 which undoubtedly belongs to 1738 A.D. refers to the capture of Tasgaon and Athani which happening is again referred to in this document, I would ascribe this letter to 1738 A.D., though the details of dates in both these letters work out correctly as 1730 and 1738 A.D. (SPD Vol. XI, No. 8 and document No. 5). The date of this document, therefore, comes to 15 July 1738 A.D.

The purport of this letter runs thus: "I was sent by Swami (Chhatrapati Shahu) to encounter Udaji Chavhan at Yelavi (Tasgaon, South Satara). But as he had left for Athani, I was ordered to fetch the two guns that were at Rethare Haranaksha (Walwe, South Satara). I have brought them here accordingly and handed them over to the proper custodian. The royal contingents were paid from our purse owing to which we have been reduced to a very wretched pecuniary condition. The flag of Chhatrapati Shahu was hoisted at Gumat on Tuesday the 4th of Rabi II. Both Shamrao and Apaji Mane had interview with Shahu. Sambhaji insisted that both of them should be ruthlessly cut to pieces. But the Maharaja (Chhatrapati Shahu) allowed them to vacate the post together with arms, combatants, non-combatants and half the store of corn. Both

<sup>9</sup> Konherpanta was the Diwan or chief secretary to Raghuji Bhosle and the other two persons were probably the latter's subordinates.

<sup>10</sup> Same as Shirol (Kolhapur); Shirol is sometimes called Ghumat Shirol or Shirol-with-the-dome, because it used to have a large domed tomb of a Bijapur officer named Nurkhan which Parashuram Bhau Patvardhan is said to have destroyed in 1779. (*Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. XXIV, Kolhapur, p. 319).

<sup>11</sup> SPD Vol. XI, No. 8 is very similar to document No. 5 but has some discrepancies. They are, however, only apparent and can be easily reconciled.

the persons were honoured with dress and wristlets. I am not certain but it is rumoured that Tasgaon and Athani would be the next targets. Let the tried horsemen be sent here so that the fresh recruits can be sent back.<sup>11</sup> .

I will now summarise four documents, which though not supplying altogether new information, furnish different details and are of corroborative value.

*Document No. 19* is addressed to Haibatrao *Rajajna* by one Bhalachandra Jagannath from his camp at Ainapur (Athani, Belgaum) near the Krishna river, dated the 1st of Rabi II and purports to the following effect. "Shrimanta (Peshwa?) has encamped here for the present but has despatched Mahadaba (Purandare) to the Karnataka and we shall be ordered either to accompany him or remain with Shrimanta, who intends to leave for the Ganga (Godavari). But perhaps his honour may travel through the tract owned by Angre".

I am not quite certain about the date of this document; but in all probability it belongs to 1755 A.D. The exact date of the document comes to 14 January 1755 A.D. when Balaji Bajirao, the third Peshwa, was encamped near Ainapur.

*Document No. 26* is addressed to one Shamji by one Ramachandra Mahadeva and bears no date. But it certainly refers to the early movements in connection with the battle of Udgir fought between Balaji Bajirao, the third Peshwa, and the then Nizam Salabat Jang in the beginning of 1760 A.D. It can be summarised thus: "The army of Shrimanta (Balaji Bajirao) is at Ahmadnagar while that of Bhausahib is at Parali Vaijanatha (Bid, Nizam state). The Mughal's (Nizam's) army is at a distance of twenty villages (60 miles). Nana Purandhare, Visaji Krishna (Binivale) and Balavantarao (Mehendale) have been sent in advance with an army of ten thousand soldiers".

*Document No. 4* is incomplete, is addressed to Ramachandrapanta, Moropanta and Bhanopanta by one Moro Khanderao from his halting station at Avantika (Ujjain) and is dated the bright 2nd of the intercalary month (*Shravana*). As it refers to the movements of Marathas and Durrani troops in 1760 A.D., its exact date comes to 14 July 1760 A.D. Its gist runs thus: "Bhausahib, Shinde, Holkar, Pawar and other generals have encamped at Agra, while Gilja (Ahmadshah Durrani) has encamped on the other bank of the Yamuna, where Madhosingh and other chiefs of Hindustan met him. Surajmal Jat and Shuja-ud-daula had formerly sided with the Dekkanis. But Najibkhan saw the latter and persuaded him to join Ahmadshah with his fifty to sixty thousand men. Thus our army is one-third of that of the enemy; but due to good luck of Shrimanta (the Peshwa) we are sure to win. Owing to the fracture of my arm. I wished to return home; but according to the suggestion of Shrimanta to proceed to Agra, I have retraced my steps but have

to remain here owing to the rainy season. I wish to proceed to Agra by Vijayadashami (19 October 1760) along with others". *Rajwade*, vol. I, Nos. 216 and 217 are very nicely corroborated by this document.

*Document No. 27* is addressed to Panta Swami (Haibatrao Bhavanishankar?) by Chitako Shankar and Krishnaji Ananta and is dated the bright 3rd of *Chaitra*. As it refers to Raghunatharao Peshwa's flight to Gujarat and Haripanta Phadake's pursuit of him, its exact date comes to 3 April 1775 A.D. It states that Haripanta Tatya (Phadake) is on the Ghats, Apa Balavanta (Mehendale) is near Navapur (West Khandesh), Dadasahib has halted at Songadh near Mandvi and the English have commenced peace talks with the Marathas at Purandhar.



